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The Art of Being Bored:
a Comedy in Three Acts:
by Edouard Pailleron:
Translated by Barrett H.
Clark and Hilmar Bauk-
hage

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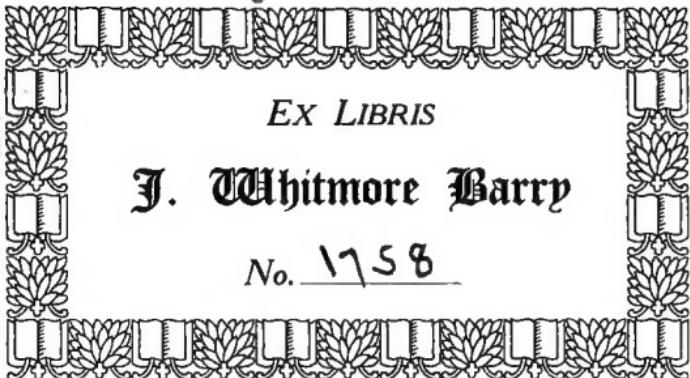
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THE WORLD'S BEST PLAYS

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BARRETT H. CLARK

GENERAL EDITOR

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BY BARRETT H. CLARK

EDOUARD PAILLERON.

The author of "*Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie*" was born at Paris in 1834. Besides this, his masterpiece, he wrote numerous comedies, sentimental and satirical. Pailleron is in no way concerned with problems or "ideas;" he is content to depict the foibles and affectations of society, framing his observations into a harmonious and unified whole. This play was first produced, at Paris, in 1881, and has since held the stage, both in France and Germany.

The scenery and costumes are modern.

Owing to the number of characters, some attention must be paid to the grouping of stage pictures. The stage-directions, if carefully followed will supply sufficient information to enable the director to group with ease.

THE ART OF BEING BORED.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

BELLAC
ROGER DE CÉRAN
PAUL RAYMOND
TOULONNIER
GENERAL DE BRIAIS
VIROT
FRANCOIS
SAINT-RÉAULT
GAIAC
MELCHIOR DE BOINES
DES MILLETS
DUCHESS DE RÉVILLE
MADAME DE LOUDAN
JEANNE RAYMOND
LUCY WATSON
SUZANNE DE VILLIERS
COUNTESS DE CÉRAN
MADAME ARRIÉGO
MADAME DE BOINES
MADAME DE SAINT-RÉAULT

SCENE:—*A drawing-room in MADAME DE CÉRAN's château at SAINT GERMAIN.*

The Art of Being Bored.

ACT I.

A drawing-room, with a large entrance at the back, opening upon another room. Entrances up and down stage. To the left between the two doors, a piano. Right, an entrance down-stage, on the same side; farther up, a large alcove with a glazed door leading into the garden, left; a table, on either side of which is a chair; to the right, a small table and a sofa, armchairs, etc.

FRANCOIS. (*Looking among the papers which litter the table*) It couldn't be on top here—nor here: *Revue Matérialiste* . . *Revue des Cours—Journal des Savants*—

(Enter LUCY.)

LUCY. Well, François, have you found the letter?

FRANCOIS. No, Miss Lucy, not yet.

LUCY. Pink paper—opened—no envelope?

FRANCOIS. Is it addressed to Miss Watson?

LUCY. Didn't I tell you it was addressed to me?

FRANCOIS. But—

LUCY. The point is, have you found it?

FRANCOIS. Not yet, but I shall look everywhere, and ask—

LUCY. Don't ask; there's no need. But it must

be found, so look carefully. Go over every foot of ground from where you gave us our letters this morning, to this room. It couldn't have fallen anywhere else. Please, please hunt for it! (*She goes out*)

FRANCOIS. (*Alone, as he returns to the table*)
 "Hunt, hunt?" *Revue Coloniale—Revue Diplomatique—Revue Archéologique*—

(*Enter JEANNE and PAUL.*)

JEANNE. (*Gaily*) Someone here! (*To FRANCOIS*) Madame de Céran—

PAUL. (*Taking her hand*) Sh! (*To FRANCOIS, gravely*) Is Madame la Comtesse de Céran in the château at present?

FRANCOIS. Yes, Monsieur.

JEANNE. (*Gaily*) Very well, tell her that Monsieur and Madame Paul—

PAUL. (*As before, coldly*) Be good enough to announce to her that M. Raymond, Sub-prefect* of Agenis, and Mme. Raymond, have arrived from Paris, and await her pleasure in the drawing-room.

JEANNE. And that—

PAUL. (*As before*) Sh. That's all, please.

FRANCOIS. Very well, M. le Sous-préfet. (*Aside*) Newlyweds!— Shall I take Monsieur's—? (*He takes their bags and rugs, and goes out*)

JEANNE. Now, Paul—

PAUL. No "Paul" here: "M. Raymond!"

JEANNE. What, d'you want me to—? †

PAUL. Not here, I tell you.

JEANNE. (*Laughing*) What a scowl!

PAUL. Please, you mustn't laugh out loud here.

* A prefect is the officer in charge of the administrative affairs of the "Département," one of the 96 divisions of France.—Tr.
 † Jeanne uses the "tu" of familiar discourse, in place of the more formal "vous."

JEANNE. How is this, Monsieur, you are scolding me? (*She throws herself into his arms, but he disengages himself, terrified*)

PAUL. Silly! That would be enough to spoil everything!

JEANNE. Oh! What a bore——!

PAUL. Precisely! That time you struck exactly the right note. You surely haven't forgotten all I told you in the train?

JEANNE. Why, I thought you were joking!

PAUL. Joking? So you don't want to be the wife of a Prefect?—Tell me?

JEANNE. Yes, if it would please you.

PAUL. Very well, dear. I call you dear, as we are alone, but later on, before the guests, it must be merely Jeanne. The Comtesse de Céran has done me the honor of asking me to introduce to her my young wife, and of spending a few days here at her château at St. Germain. Mme. de Céran's circle is one of the three or four most influential in Paris. We are not here to amuse ourselves. I come here merely a Sub-prefect; I am determined to leave, a Prefect—Everything depends on her—upon us—upon you!

JEANNE. Upon me? What do you mean?

PAUL. Of course, on you! Society judges a man by his wife, and society is right. Therefore be on your guard.—Dignity without pride; a knowing smile—ears and eyes open, lips **closed**! Oh, compliments, as many as you like, and quotations, short and authoritative: for philosophy try Hegel; for literature, Jean Paul; politics——

JEANNE. But I don't understand politics.

PAUL. Here all the women talk politics.

JEANNE. Well, I know nothing whatever about it.

PAUL. Neither do they, but that doesn't make any difference. Cite Pufendorff and Machiavelli as if they were your own relatives, and talk about the

Council of Trent as if you had presided over it. As for your amusements: chamber music, strolls in garden, and whist—that's all I can allow. Your clothes must be chosen with great care, and as for Latin—use a few words that I've taught you—In a week's time I want it to be said of you: “Ah, that little Mme. Raymond will be the wife of a Cabinet Minister some day!” And in this circle, you know, when they say that a woman will be a Cabinet Minister's wife, her husband is not very far from a portfolio.

JEANNE. What? Do you want to be Minister?—Why?

PAUL. In order to prevent myself from becoming famous.

JEANNE. But Mme. de Céran belongs to the opposition; what can you expect from her?

PAUL. How simple you are! In the matter of political positions, there is only the slightest shade of difference between the Conservatives and their opponents: the Conservatives ask for places and their opponents accept them. No, no, my child, this is the place where reputations are made and unmade and made over; where, under the appearance of talking literature and art, Machiavellian conspirators hatch their schemes: this is the small private entrance to the ministries, the antechamber of the Academies, the laboratory of success!

JEANNE. Heavens! What sort of circle is this?

PAUL. It is the 1881 edition of the Hôtel de Rambouillet: a section of society where everybody talks and poses, where pedantry masquerades as knowledge, sentimentality as sentiment and preciosity as delicacy and refinement;—here no one ever dreams of saying what he thinks, and never believes what one says, where friendship is a matter of cold calculation, and chivalry and manners merely means to an end. It is where one swallows his tongue in the drawing-room just as he leaves

his cane in the hallway: in short, Society where one learns the art of being serious!

JEANNE. I should say, the art of being bored!

PAUL. Precisely!

JEANNE. But if everyone bores everyone else, what possible influence can it all have?

PAUL. What influence? How simple you are! You ask what influence can boredom exert, here, in this country? A great deal, I tell you. You see. the Frenchman has a horror amounting almost to veneration of boredom. *Ennui* is for him a terrible god whose worship is celebrated by good-form. He recognizes nothing as serious unless it is in regulation dress. I don't say that he practises what he preaches, but that is only a further reason for believing more firmly: he prefers believing to finding out for himself. I tell you, this nation, which is at bottom gay, despises itself for being so; it has forgotten its faith in the good commonsense of its generous laughter, this sceptical and talkative nation believes in those who have little to say, this whole-hearted and amiable people allows itself to be imposed upon by pedantic false pride and the pretentious asaninity of the pontiffs of the white dress neck-tie: in politics, in science, in art, in literature, in everything! These they scoff at, hate, fly from as from pestilence, yet they alone preserve for these things a secret admiration and perfect confidence! And you ask what influence has boredom? Ah, my dear girl, there are just two kinds of people in the world: those who don't know how to bore themselves, and who are nobodies; and those who know how to bore themselves, and who are somebody—besides those who know how to bore others!

JEANNE. And this is the sort of place you've brought me to!

PAUL. Do you want to be a Prefect's wife? Tell me?

JEANNE. Oh, to begin with, I could never—

PAUL. Oh, never mind! It's only for a week!

JEANNE. A week! Without speaking, without laughing, without a kiss from you!

PAUL. That's before company; but when we are alone—in the dark, oh, then! Why, it will be delightful; we'll arrange secret meetings, in the garden, everywhere—just as we did before we were married—at your father's, do you remember?

JEANNE. Very well, very well!—(*She opens the piano and plays an air from La Fille de Madame Angot**)

PAUL. (*Terrified*) Very well, then!—What are you doing there?

JEANNE. It's from the opera we saw last night!

PAUL. My poor child, so this is the way you make use of my advice!

JEANNE. We sat in a *baignoire*,† together—wasn't it lovely, Paul!

PAUL. Jeanne!—Jeanne!—What if someone should come in! Please!

(FRANCOIS appears at the back.)

PAUL. Too late! (JEANNE changes the air she was playing into a Beethoven Symphony. *Aside*) Beethoven!—Bravo! (He listens to the music with profound satisfaction) Ah, it's a fact that the only place for music is the *Conservatoire*!

FRANCOIS. Madame la Comtesse requests Monsieur le Sous-préfet to wait five minutes for her: she is in consultation with Monsieur le Baron Eriel de Saint-Réault.

PAUL. The Orientalist?

FRANCOIS. I do not know, Monsieur, he is the son of the scientist whose father was so talented—

PAUL. (*Aside*) And who has so many positions

* A celebrated light opera.—Tr.

† A small box beneath the balcony, common in French Theatres.—Tr.

to dispose of! He's the one!—Ah, M. de Saint-Réault is here, then; I presume that Mme. de Saint-Réault is with him?

FRANCOIS. Yes, M. le Sous-préfet; likewise the Marquise de Loudan and Mme. Arriégo, but these ladies are at present in Paris, following M. Bellac's course—with Mlle. Suzanne de Villiers.

PAUL. There are no other guests here?

FRANCOIS. There is Madame la duchesse de Réville, Madame's aunt.

PAUL. I don't refer to the Duchess nor to Miss Watson; nor to Mlle. de Villiers: they are the family! I mean guests, like ourselves.

FRANCOIS. No, M. le Sous-préfet, there are no others.

PAUL. And no one else is expected?

FRANCOIS. No one? Oh, yes, M. le Sous-préfet; M. Roger, the son of Mme. la Comtesse has just arrived to-day from his scientific investigations in the Orient. He is expected any moment—Ah, and then M. Bellac, the professor, who is to spend a few days here when his lecture course is over—at least we hope so.

PAUL. (*Aside*) Ah, that's why there are so many ladies!—Very well, thank you.

FRANCOIS. Then M. le Sous-préfet will be good enough to wait?

PAUL. Yes, and tell Mme. la Comtesse not to hurry. (FRANCOIS *goes out*) Whew! You gave me a turn with that music! But you got out of it beautifully, changing Lecocq to Beethoven! Rather good, that!

JEANNE. Silly, am I not?

PAUL. I know better now! We have still five minutes; I'll tell you a little about these people: it's best to be on the safe side.

JEANNE. Oh, never mind!

PAUL. Come, Jeanne, five minutes! You *must* know something about them!

JEANNE. After each "something" you must kiss me!

PAUL. All right then; what a child you are! I won't be long: mother, son, friend, and guest,—everyone of them very serious!

JEANNE. How amusing that will be!

PAUL. Don't worry, there are two who are not so serious. I have kept them for the last.

JEANNE. One moment, please, pay me first! (*She counts on her fingers*) Madame de Céran, one; her son Roger, two; Miss Lucy, three; the two Saint-Réault; one Bellac, one Loudan and one Arriégo, that makes eight! (*She puts her cheek up to be kissed*)

PAUL. Eight what?

JEANNE. Eight "somethings"—pay.

PAUL. *What a child! There, there, there!* (*He kisses her*)

JEANNE. Not so fast: retail, if you please.

PAUL. (*After having kissed her more slowly*) There, does that satisfy you?

JEANNE. For the present. Now, let's have the two who are not serious!

PAUL. First, the Duchess de Réville, the hereditary aunt, a handsome old lady who was a beauty in her day—

JEANNE. (*Questioningly*) Hmm?

PAUL. So they say! A bit brusque and direct—but an excellent lady and very sensible.—As you'll see. But last and best, Suzanne de Villiers! She is not at all serious—it's a fault with her.

JEANNE. At last, somebody who's frivolous.

PAUL. Girl of eighteen, a tom-boy, chatter-box, free with her tongue and her manners—with a life-history that reads like a novel.

JEANNE. Umm! Lovely, let's hear it!

PAUL. She's the daughter of a certain widow—

JEANNE. Yes?

PAUL. Well? Daughter of a widow—and that

ass Georges de Villiers, another nephew of the Duchess; she adored him. An illegitimate child.

JEANNE. Illegitimate? How lovely!

PAUL. The mother and father are dead. The child was left an orphan at the age of twelve with a princely heritage and an education to match. Georges taught her Javanese. The Duchess, who adores her, brought her into the home of Madame de Céran, who detests her, and gave her Roger for a tutor. They tried their best to keep her in a convent, but she ran away twice; they sent her back a third time and—here she is again! Imagine that state of affairs! And that's the end of the story—good, isn't it?

JEANNE. So good that you needn't pay me the two kisses you owe me.—

PAUL. (*Disappointed*) Ohh!

JEANNE. But I'll pay you! (*She kisses him*)

PAUL. Silly! (*The door at the back opens*) Oh! Saint-Réault and Madame de Céran! No, she didn't see us. Now—ahem—ready!

(Enter MME. DE CÉRAN and SAINT-RÉAULT.

They pause in the doorway, not seeing PAUL and JEANNE.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. No, no, no my friend, not the first poll! Listen to me, 15-8-15 the first poll—There was a secret ballot on that one and therefore on the second poll: it's very simple!

SAINT-RÉAULT. Simple? Simple? Now the second poll, since I have only four votes on the second poll, with our nine votes on the first poll—that leaves us only thirteen on the second!

MME. DE CÉRAN. And our seven on the first—that makes twenty on the second! Don't you see?

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*Enlightened*) Ahhh!

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) Very simple!

MME. DE CÉRAN. I repeat, beware of Dalibert and his Liberals. At present the Academy is Liberal

—at present—at present! (*they come down-stage, talking*)

SAINT-RÉAULT. Isn't Revel also the leader of the New School?

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Looking at him*) Ohh! Revel isn't dead yet, is he?

SAINT-RÉAULT. Oh, no!

MME. DE CÉRAN. He isn't ill?

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*Slightly embarrassed*) Oh, he's always in poor health.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Well then?

SAINT-RÉAULT. We must always be prepared, mustn't we?—I'll keep my eyes open.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Aside*) There's something at the bottom of all this! (*Seeing RAYMOND, and going toward him*) Ah, my dear Monsieur Raymond, I was forgetting all about you; pardon me!

PAUL. My dear Countess—(*Presenting JEANNE*) Madame Paul Raymond!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You are most welcome here, Madame! Consider yourself in the home of a friend. (*Presenting them to SAINT-RÉAULT*) Monsieur Paul Raymond, Sub-prefect of Agenis, Madame Paul Raymond, Monsieur le Baron Eriel de Saint-Réault.

PAUL. I am especially happy to make your acquaintance since, as a young man it was my privilege to know your illustrious father. (*Aside*) He stuck me on my final examinations!

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*Bowing*) What a pleasant coincidence, M. le Préfet!

PAUL. Especially pleasant for me, M. le Baron!

(SAINT-RÉAULT goes to the table and writes.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. You will find my house a trifle austere for a person of your youth, Madame. You have only your husband to blame if your stay here—it has its moments of monotony, but you may

console yourself with the thought that resignation means obedience, and that in coming here you had no choice.

JEANNE. (*Gravely*) As regards what, Mme. la Comtesse, "To be free is not to do what one wishes, but what one judges to be best"—as the philosopher Joubert has said.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Looking approvingly at PAUL*) That is quite reassuring, my dear. But I think you will find that no matter how intellectual our circle may be, it is not lacking in *esprit*. Indeed this very evening you will find the *soirée* particularly interesting. Monsieur de Saint-Réault has been kind enough to offer to read to us from his unpublished work on Rama-Ravana and the Sanscrit Legends.

PAUL. Really! Oh, Jeanne!

JEANNE. How fortunate we are!

MME. DE CÉRAN. After which I believe I can promise you something from Monsieur Bellac.

JEANNE. The Professor?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Do you know him?

JEANNE. What woman doesn't? How delightful that will be!

MME. DE CÉRAN. An informal talk—*ad usum mundi*—a few words, gems of wisdom; and finally, the reading of an unpublished play.

PAUL. Oh! In verse?

MME. DE CÉRAN. The first work of a young man—an unknown poet, who is to be introduced to me this evening and whose play has just been accepted by the Théâtre-Français.

PAUL. How fortunate we are to be able to enjoy among these charming people another of these wonderful opportunities that one finds nowhere except beneath your roof.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Doesn't this literary atmosphere frighten you, Madame? Your charms will be wasted at a *soirée* like this.

JEANNE. (*Seriously*) "What appears a waste to the vulgar, is often a gain"—as M. de Tocqueville has said.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Looking at her in astonishment, aside to PAUL*) She is charming! (*SAINT-RÉAULT rises, and goes toward the door*) Saint-Réault where are you going?

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*As he goes out*) To the station—a telegram—Excuse me—I'll be back in ten minutes. (*He goes out*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. There is certainly something at the bottom of all this! (*She looks among the papers on the table—to JEANNE and PAUL*) I beg your pardon! (*She rings, and after a moment FRANCOIS appears*) The papers?

FRANCOIS. M. de Saint-Réault took them away this morning. They are in his room.

PAUL. (*Drawing Le Journal Amusant from his pocket*) If you wish the—

JEANNE. (*Quickly checking him and at the same time producing the Journal des Débats* from her pocket and offering it to MME. DE CÉRAN*) This is to-day's paper, Countess.

MME. DE CÉRAN. With pleasure—I am curious about—please pardon me again! (*She opens the paper and reads*)

PAUL. (*To his wife*) Bravo! Keep it up! The Joubert was excellent and the de Tocqueville—I say!

JEANNE. It wasn't de Tocqueville,—it was *I*.

PAUL. Oh!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Reading*) "Revel very ill."—So, just what I thought. He isn't losing much time, Saint-Réault! (*Handing the paper to PAUL*) I found out what I wanted to know, thank you. But I shan't keep you, you shall be shown to your rooms. We dine sharp at six; you know the Duchess is

*The *Journal Amusant* is a comic paper, the *Journal des Débats* is a very old and conservative organ.—Tr.

very punctual. At four tea is served; at five we take a stroll and at six have dinner. (*The clock strikes four*) Ah, four already, and here she is! (*The DUCHESS enters, followed by FRANCOIS, who brings her chair and her work-basket. A maid brings tea. The DUCHESS sits in the chair placed for her*) My dear Aunt, allow me to present—

DUCHESS. (*Settling herself*) Wait a minute—wait a minute. There! Present whom?—(*She looks through her lorgnette*) It isn't Raymond that you want to present, is it? I've known him for many a day.

PAUL. (*Advancing with JEANNE*) No, Duchess, but Madame Paul Raymond, his wife,—if you please!

DUCHESS. (*Gazing at JEANNE, who bows*) She's pretty—Very pretty! With my Suzanne, and Lucy, despite her glasses, that makes three pretty women in my house—And heaven knows that's not too many—(*She drinks*) And how on earth did a charming girl like you happen to marry that awful Republican?

PAUL. (*Chaffingly*) Oh, Duchess, I a Republican!

DUCHESS. Well, you were one, at least! (*She drinks again*)

PAUL. Oh, well, like everyone else, when I was little. That is the measles of politics, Duchess, everybody has to have it.

DUCHESS. (*Laughing*) Ah, oh, ah! the measles. Isn't he funny! (*To JEANNE*) And you, my dear, you like a joke once in a while, too?

JEANNE. Oh, Duchess, I have no objection to a little frivolity—in moderation.

DUCHESS. That isn't very frivolous, but it's better than nothing—so much the worse—I like a little frivolity myself, especially in a person of your age. (*To the maid*) Here, take this away. (*She hands her cup to the maid*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To the maid*) Will you show Madame Raymond to her room, Mademoiselle? (*To JEANNE*) Your room is this way, just next to mine—

JEANNE. Thank you, madame. (*To PAUL*) Come, dear.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, no, I have put your husband over there on the other side, among the workers; my son, the Count and Monsieur Bellac, in the Pavillion, which we call—a little pretentiously perhaps—the Pavillion of the Muses. (*To PAUL*) François will show you the way. I thought you would be able to work better there.

PAUL. Admirable arrangement, Countess; I thank you. (*JEANNE pinches him*) Ouch!

JEANNE. (*Sweetly*) Go, my dear.

PAUL. (*Aside to her*) You'll come at least and let me unpack my trunks?

JEANNE. How can I?

PAUL. Through the upper corridor.

DUCHESS. (*To MME. DE CÉRAN*) If you think it pleases those two to separate them like that—

JEANNE. (*Aside*) I've gone too far!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To JEANNE*) Aren't you pleased with this arrangement?

JEANNE. Perfectly, Madame la Comtesse; and you know better than anyone else *quid deceat, quid non.* (*She bows*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To PAUL*) She is perfectly charming!

(*They go out; PAUL right, JEANNE left.*)

DUCHESS. (*Seated near the table at the left, working at her fancy-work*) Ah, she knows Latin! She ought to be congenial to the company!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You know Revel is very ill.

DUCHESS. He is never anything else,—what's that to me?

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Sitting down*) What do you mean, Aunt? Revel is a second Saint-Réault. He holds at least fifteen positions: leader of the New School for instance, a position which leads to any number of others! Just the thing for Roger. He returns to-day, and I've asked the Minister's secretary to dinner this evening, you know.

DUCHESS. Yes, a new one: Toulonnier.

MME. DE CÉRAN. I take away his position from him to-night.

DUCHESS. So you want to make your son the leader of a school?

MME. DE CÉRAN. It'll be another stepping-stone, you know, Aunt.

DUCHESS. You have brought him up to be a mere chess pawn, haven't you?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I have made of him a serious minded man, Aunt.

DUCHESS. Yes, I should think so! A man of twenty-eight, who has never—done a foolish thing in his life, I'll wager! It's a perfect shame!

MME. DE CÉRAN. At thirty he will enter the Institute, and at thirty-five, the Chamber of Deputies.

DUCHESS. So you want to begin again with your son, and do with him as you did with his father?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Did I make so miserable a failure of him?

DUCHESS. I say nothing about your husband: a dry-as-dust creature, with a mediocre intelligence—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Aunt!

DUCHESS. Of course, your husband was a fool!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Duchess!

DUCHESS. A fool who happened to know how to behave himself! You forced him into politics, you'll admit that. And then, all you could make of him was Minister of Agriculture and Commerce. That isn't much to boast about. But enough of

him; Roger's another matter: he has brains and spirit enough—or will have, God willing—Or he's no nephew of mine. That never occurred to you, did it?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I am thinking of his career.

DUCHESS. And his happiness?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I have thought of that, too.

DUCHESS. Ah, yes! Lucy, eh? They correspond, I know that. That's fine! A young girl who wears glasses and has a neck like a—! And you call that thinking of his happiness!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Duchess, you are incorrigible!

DUCHESS. A sort of meteorite, who fell among us, intending to stop two weeks, and has been here two years: a blue-stocking who writes letters to scholars and translates Schopenhauer!

MME. DE CÉRAN. A rich, intellectual, highly-educated and well-born orphan, niece of the Lord-Chancellor, who recommended her: she would be a splendid wife for Roger, and—

DUCHESS. That English ice-berg?! Brrrr! Merely to kiss her would freeze the nose off his face! But you're on a false scent. In the first place Bellac has his eye on her:—yes, the Professor! He's asked me too many questions about her to leave any doubt in my mind. And what is more, she seems to be fond of *him*.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Lucy?

DUCHESS. Yes, Lucy,—like all the rest of you! You're all mad over him. I know more about this than you do.—No, no! Lucy is not the woman for your son!

MME. DE CÉRAN. I know your schemes: Suzanne is the woman!

DUCHESS. I don't deny it. I have brought Suzanne here for that very purpose. I arranged that he should be her tutor and her master, so to speak, in order that he might marry her,—and marry her he shall!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You have counted without me, Duchess; I shall never consent.

DUCHESS. And why not? A girl who—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Is of questionable origin, questionable attraction, without education, and no manners.

DUCHESS. (*Bursting into laughter*) My living image at her age!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Without fortune! Without family!

DUCHESS. Without family? The daughter of my poor Georges? My handsome, good, kind Georges!—And she's your cousin after all!

MME. DE CÉRAN. A natural child!

DUCHESS. Natural? Aren't all children natural? You amuse me! She's been legally recognised! And good heavens, when the devil's put his finger in the pie why shouldn't the rest of us? Me, too?

MME. DE CÉRAN. The devil has put his finger in the pie, but not the way you think. *You* are on the false scent.

DUCHESS. Oh, the Professor! Yes, Bellac. You told me that. You think no woman can follow his lectures without falling in love with him?

MME. DE CÉRAN. But Suzanne hasn't missed a single lecture, Aunt, and she takes notes and corrects them and copies them—I tell you Suzanne is in earnest. And while he is speaking she never takes her eyes off him; she drinks in every word. And you think that is all for the sake of science! Nonsense, it isn't the science she loves, it's the scientist. That is as plain as day. You have only to watch her when she's with Lucy. She is fearfully jealous. And this recently acquired coquetry in a girl of her disposition—! She sighs, sulks, blushes, turns pale, laughs, cries—

DUCHESS. April showers! She's just coming into bloom. She's bored, poor child!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Here?

DUCHESS. Here? Do you think it's amusing here? Do you suppose that if *I* were eighteen, I should be here, among all your old ladies and your old gentlemen? I should say not! I'd associate with young people all the time; the younger the better, the handsomer the better, the more admirers I had the better! There are only two things that women never grow weary of: loving and being loved! And the older I grow the more I realize that there is no other happiness in the world!

MME. DE CÉRAN. There are more serious things than that in life, Duchess.

DUCHESS. More serious than love? Nonsense! Do you mean to say that when that is gone, there is any other happiness left? When we are old, we have false pleasures, just as we have false teeth, but there is only one true happiness, and that is love, love!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, Aunt, you are too romantic!

DUCHESS. A fault of my years! Women find romance but twice in their lives: at sixteen in their own hearts, at sixty in the hearts of others. Well, you want your son to marry Lucy; I want him to marry Suzanne. You say Suzanne is in love with Bellac; I say, Lucy. Perhaps we are both wrong; it is for Roger to decide.

MME. DE CÉRAN. How?

DUCHESS. I shall explain the whole situation to him the moment he arrives.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Do you intend——?

DUCHESS. He is her tutor! He must know. (*Aside*) That will prick him up a bit; he needs it!

(Enter LUCY.)

LUCY. (*Who wears a low-cut evening gown, with a cloak*) I believe your son has arrived, Madame.

MME. DE CÉRAN. The Count!

DUCHESS. Roger!

LUCY. His carriage has just come into the court.

MME. DE CÉRAN. At last!

DUCHESS. Were you afraid he wouldn't return?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I feared he would not return in time. I was anxious about that place for him.

LUCY. Oh, he wrote me this morning that he would return to-day, Thursday.

DUCHESS. And you missed one of the Professor's lectures in order to see him that much sooner. Hm, that's lovely!

LUCY. That wasn't the reason, Madame.

DUCHESS. (*Aside to MME. DE CÉRAN*) You see?—No? Why then?

LUCY. No, I was looking for—I—it was another matter.

DUCHESS. I don't suppose it is for that Schopenhauer gentleman you are all dressed up like that, is it?

LUCY. Is there not to be company this evening, Madame?

DUCHESS. (*Aside to MME. DE CÉRAN*) Bellac, that's as plain as day! (*To LUCY*) Let me congratulate you, then. I have nothing to complain of, except those frightful glasses. Why do you wear such awful things?

LUCY. Because I cannot see without them, Madame.

DUCHESS. A nice reason! (*Aside*) Isn't she practical! I detest practical people! She'll pass, she's not as thin as I thought she was! These English occasionally disappoint one pleasantly!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Ah, here's my son!

(*Enter ROGER.*)

ROGER. Mother! Mother! How good it is to see you again!

MME. DE CÉRAN. How good it is to see you, my dear! (*She holds out her hand, which he kisses*)

ROGER. What a long while it is since I've seen you!—Once more! (*He kisses her hand again*)

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) That embrace wouldn't smother anyone!

MME. DE CÉRAN. The Duchess, my dear!

ROGER. (*Approaching the DUCHESS*) Duchess!

DUCHESS. Call me Aunt, and give me a kiss!

ROGER. My dear Aunt! (*He starts to kiss her hand*)

DUCHESS. No! No! On the cheek! You must kiss me on the cheek! That is one of the privileges of age—Look at him now! Same little mannikin as ever! Oh, you've let your moustache grow; isn't he charming!

MME. DE CÉRAN. I hope, Roger, you will shave that off!

ROGER. Don't let it disturb you, Mother, I shall do it at once!—Ah, how do you do, Lucy?

LUCY. How do you do, Roger? (*They shake hands*) Have you had a pleasant trip?

ROGER. Oh, most interesting. Think of it, an almost unexplored country, a veritable paradise for the scholar, the poet, and the artist—but I wrote you all about that!

DUCHESS. (*Sitting down*) Tell me about the women?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Duchess!

ROGER. (*Astonished*) What women do you mean, Aunt?

DUCHESS. Why, the Oriental women they say are so beautiful—Ah, you villain!

ROGER. Let me assure you, Aunt, that I had no time to investigate that—detail!

DUCHESS. (*Indignantly*) Detail, indeed!

ROGER. (*Smiling*) Besides, the Government did not send me there for that!

DUCHESS. What did you see, then?

ROGER. You will find that in the *Revue Archéologique*.

LUCY. *Tombs of Eastern Asia*; isn't that the subject, Roger?

ROGER. Yes, Lucy; now, among those mounds—

LUCY. Ah, the mounds—those *Tumuli*—

DUCHESS. Come, come, you can chatter when you two are alone! Tell me, aren't you tired? Did you just arrive?

ROGER. Oh, no, Aunt, I've been in Paris since yesterday.

DUCHESS. Did you go to the theater last night?

ROGER. No, I went at once to see the Minister.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Good! And what did he have to say to you?

LUCY. I'll leave you alone!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You needn't go, Lucy.

LUCY. Oh, I think I ought to go. I shall return in a few mintues. I'll see you later.

ROGER. (*Taking her hand*) Until later, Lucy.

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) There's a grand passion indeed!

(LUCY goes out. ROGER accompanies her as far as door to the left, while MME. DE CÉRAN takes her place in the arm-chair, at the other side of the table.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Now, let's hear what the Minister had to say!

DUCHESS. Ah, yes! Let's hear. We're anxious to know.

ROGER. He questioned me as to the results of my trip and asked me to submit my report as soon as possible, promising me a reward on the day it was handed in. You can guess what that reward will be. (*He touches the lapel of his coat, as if to show the ribbon of the Legion of Honor*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Officer?* That's all very well, but I have something better. And then?

* The second of the three degrees in the Legion of Honor, of which he Chevalier is the lowest.

ROGER. Then he asked me to convey to you his kindest regards, and begged you keep him in mind when that law came up for consideration by the Senate.

MME. DE CÉRAN. I shall keep him in mind if he keeps me in mind.—You must set to work on your report at once.

ROGER. Immediately!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Did you leave cards for the Speaker of the House?

ROGER. Yes, this morning, and for General de Briais and Mme. de Vielfond.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Good! It must be known that you have returned. I'll have a paragraph sent to the papers.—And one thing more: those articles you sent back from the East were very good. But I noticed with astonishment a tendency toward—what shall I say?—imagination, “fine” writing; descriptions, irrelevancies—even poetry—(*Reproachfully*) Alfred de Musset, my son!

DUCHESS. Yes, the article was most interesting: you must be more careful.

MME. DE CÉRAN. The Duchess is joking, my dear. But be careful of the poetry, never do it again! You are concerned with serious subjects; you must be serious yourself.

ROGER. But I had no idea, Mother!—How can you tell when an article is serious?

DUCHESS. (*Holding up a pamphlet*) When the pages aren't cut!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Your Aunt exaggerates, but take my advice, no more poetry!—And now, dinner at six. You have an hour to work on your report. I shan't keep you any longer. Go to work, my dear.

DUCHESS. Just a moment! Now that this tender and affecting scene is over let us talk business, if you please. What about Suzanne?

ROGER. Oh, the dear child! Where is she?

DUCHESS. Attending a course of lectures on Comparative Literature.

ROGER. Suzanne?!

DUCHESS. Yes, Bellac's course.

ROGER. Bellac, who is he?

DUCHESS. One of this winter's crop! The season's fad in scholars. A gallant knight from the Normal School, who makes love to the ladies, is made love to by them—and thereby makes a comfortable living. The Princess Okolitch, who is mad about him, like all the old ladies, conceived the idea of having him deliver a course of lectures in her salon, with literature as an excuse, and gossip as a result. It appears that your pupil, having seen all these grand ladies smitten with this young, amiable, and loquacious genius, has followed in the footsteps of her elders.

MME. DE CÉRAN. It is no use, Duchess——

DUCHESS. I beg your pardon; Roger is her tutor and he ought to know everything!

ROGER. But what does all this mean, Aunt?

DUCHESS. It means that Suzanne is in love with this gentleman; now do you understand?

ROGER. Suzanne! That child! Nonsense!

DUCHESS. It doesn't take so long for a child to change into a woman, you know.

ROGER. Suzanne!

DUCHESS. Well, at least that is what your mother says.

MME. DE CÉRAN. I say,—that that young lady is openly courting favor with a man much too serious to marry her, but gallant enough to amuse her, and to have this going on under my own roof,—though it isn't as yet scandalous—is decidedly improper.

DUCHESS. (*To Roger*) Do you hear that?

ROGER. But, Mother, you surprise me! Suzanne, a little child I left in short dresses, climbing trees, a child I used to punish with extra lessons, who

used to jump on my knee and call me Daddy—Come, come! It is impossible! such demoralization at her age—

DUCHESS. Demoralization? Because she is in love! You are a true son of your mother, if there ever was one! At “her age!” You ought to have seen me when I was that old! There was a hussar, in a blue and silver uniform! He was superb! His brains were all in his sword-hilt! But at my age—! A young heart is like a new land: the discoverer is seldom the ruler. Now it seems—this Bellac—oh, it doesn’t seem possible, and yet—young girls, you know—we must take care! (Aside) I don’t believe a word of it, but I’ll be on my guard!—And that is why I want you to do me the favor of burying your *Tumuli* and giving your attention to her and her alone.

(Enter SUZANNE.)

SUZANNE. (*Stealing up behind ROGER, puts her hands over his eyes*) Who is it?

ROGER. (*Rising*) Ehh?

SUZANNE. (*Stepping in front of him*) Here I am!

ROGER. (*Surprised*) But,—Mademoiselle!

SUZANNE. Naughty man! Not to recognize your own daughter!

ROGER. Suzanne!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) He’s blushing!

SUZANNE. Well, aren’t you going to kiss me?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Suzanne, that’s not quite the thing—

SUZANNE. To kiss your father? The idea!

DUCHESS. (*To ROGER*) Kiss her, why don’t you!

(Suzanne and ROGER kiss.)

SUZANNE. How happy I am! Just think, I had

no idea you were coming home to-day! Mme. de Saint-Réault told me just now at the lecture; so, without saying a word—I was right near the door—I whisked out and ran to the station!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Alone?

SUZANNE. Yes, all alone! Oh, it was fun! The funniest part—wait till I tell you!—When I got to the ticket office I found I didn't have a sou, and, what do you think? a gentleman who was buying his ticket offered to buy one for me. Oh, he was a very nice young man! He happened to be going to St. Germain, too, and when he offered to buy my ticket, another man offered, too: a respectable-looking old gentleman,—and then another—and after him, any number of others, who were standing there. They were all going to St. Germain. “But, Mademoiselle, I beg you—I really cannot allow you to—” “Allow me—no, me,—I beg you, Mademoiselle!” I let the old respectable gentleman buy the ticket; I did it for the sake of appearances.

MME. DE CÉRAN. You allowed him to——?

SUZANNE. I couldn't very well stay where I was, could I?

MME. DE CÉRAN. From a perfect stranger?

SUZANNE. But he was such a respectable old gentleman! And he was very nice to me! He helped me into the train. So nice of him! Of course, all the rest were, too; *they* all got into the compartment with us.—And it was so jolly! So kind! They offered me their places, every one! They opened the window for me, and then fell all over themselves being nice to me! “This way Mademoiselle! Not there, you'll be in the sun!” And they pulled down their cuffs, and twirled their moustaches, and bowed and scraped as if I'd been some grand lady—Oh, it's fun to go by yourself! And the respectable old gentleman kept talking all the time about his immense estates, but what did I care about that?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Why, this is outrageous!

SUZANNE. But the funniest thing of all was when we arrived, I found my purse in my pocket; I paid the respectable old gentleman for the ticket, made a pretty curtsey to the other gentlemen, and then I ran off. Oh, you should have seen how they all looked at me! (To ROGER) Just as you are now! Why, what's the matter? Kiss me again!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (To the DUCHESS) There's an impropriety that's even worse than the rest!

SUZANNE. Impropriety!

DUCHESS. You see, she's perfectly innocent!

MME. DE CÉRAN. A young girl traveling alone in a train!

SUZANNE. Doesn't Lucy go out alone?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Lucy is not a girl of sixteen!

SUZANNE. No, she'll never see twenty-four again!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Lucy is able to take care of herself.

SUZANNE. Why, because of those glasses of hers?

DUCHESS. (Laughing) Now, Suzanne—! (Aside) I adore that girl!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Lucy wasn't expelled from the convent!

SUZANNE. That isn't fair, and you know it! I used to be so bored—!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Your tutor knows—

SUZANNE. But he doesn't know why—you'll see if it wasn't unfair. When I used to get bored in class, I sat near the door leading into the garden. Oh, it was so easy! I had a clever plan! When everything was as quiet as could be, I shouted at the top of my voice, "Long live the great Voltaire!" Sister Séraphine at once ordered me to leave the room. It was perfectly simple, and it only took a moment. One day when the sun was shining beautifully, I was looking out of the window, and

all at once I shouted, "Long live Voltaire!" I listened, there was no answer. I shouted again, "Voltaire!" Silence again! Very much surprised, I turned around: the Mother Superior was there: I hadn't heard her come in! Tableau! But she didn't send me into the garden, oh no! She sent me here! So much the worse for them! I had had enough of that convent life.—I'm a woman now!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Your conduct fails to reveal the fact.—Mme. de Saint-Réault must be very anxious about you.

SUZANNE. Oh, the lecture was almost over: she will be here in a moment, with M. Bellac and the others. Oh, his lecture to-day——!

DUCHESS. (*Looking at ROGER*) Hm!

SUZANNE. And the way those women applauded! And the crowd! And what wonderful gowns! It was like a wedding at Ste. Clotilde! It was—(*Throwing a kiss*) superb!

DUCHESS. (*Looking at ROGER*) Hm!

SUZANNE. Superb! You ought to have heard those women! "Charming, charming!" Madame de Loudan was squeaking like a Guinea-pig. Ugh, ugh! I detest that woman!

DUCHESS. (*Looking at ROGER*) Hm! (*To SUZANNE*) Are those the notes you took at the lectures!

SUZANNE. Oh, I take others besides. (*To ROGER*) You'll see!

DUCHESS. (*To ROGER, picking up the note-book from the table, where SUZANNE had left it on entering*) Well, let's see—(*The clock strikes five*) Oh, and my walk! (*Aside to ROGER*) Now you understand Bellac's rôle in this matter?

ROGER. No, I—

DUCHESS. Examine it, study it,—it's a manuscript worth your while deciphering; that's your profession.

ROGER. I don't understand anything about this?

DUCHESS. It is your duty, you know, as her tutor.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Aside*) That's a waste of time!

DUCHESS. (*Aside, looking at ROGER*) That has waked him up!

SUZANNE. (*Aside, looking at all of them*) What are they all up to?

(*The DUCHESS and MME. DE CÉRAN go out.*)

SUZANNE. Why do you stare at me—? Because I went out alone—? Are you angry?

ROGER. No, Suzanne, but you ought to know better than to—

SUZANNE. Are you angry with me? *

ROGER. No, only—

SUZANNE. Then it's because you consider me a woman now, is it? * Do you? Tell me, I want so much to know!

ROGER. Yes, you are a woman now, and it is for that very reason that we must respect the conventions.

SUZANNE. (*Snuggling up to him*) Scold me, I love to hear you, dear!

ROGER. (*Gently pushing her away*) There now, stay over there.

SUZANNE. So you don't want me to call you "dear," either? †

ROGER. It would be better not to.

SUZANNE. That isn't easy.

ROGER. And there are other questions of propriety which you must consider. That is exactly what I was objecting to—

SUZANNE. Oh, yes, I know, I have no manners. M. Bellac is never tired of telling me so!

ROGER. Ah, Monsieur—!

* She uses the familiar "tu."—Tr.

Again she reproaches him for using the formal "vous."

SUZANNE. But what can you expect? There is no help for it! It's not my fault, I tell you, it's not my fault. It is not so easy as you think; I made a vow with myself that when you came back you would find me just as formal as Lucy, that I would wear myself out learning!—Here I've been studying six months—and then all of a sudden you appear and, whist—there goes six months' work for nothing!

ROGER. (*Reproachfully*) For nothing?

SUZANNE. Oh, how glad I am you've come! Oh, how I love you! I adore you!

ROGER. Suzanne, Suzanne! I beg of you not to use words that you cannot possibly understand.

SUZANNE. What? That I don't understand? I tell you I adore—ore you! You, you funny old thing, don't you love me, too? Why are you so funny? Do you love me better than Lucy?

ROGER. Suzanne!

SUZANNE. Are you sure? You're not going to marry her?

ROGER. Suzanne!—

SUZANNE. They told me you were.

ROGER. Nonsense!

SUZANNE. Then why do you write to her?—Oh, I know; you've written twenty-seven letters to her—I've counted them, twenty-seven!

ROGER. Those were nothing but—

SUZANNE. And one more this morning. Were they all "nothing buts"—What was in that letter that came this morning?

ROGER. I merely wrote that I should arrive on Thursday.

SUZANNE. That you would arrive on Thursday? Was that all, really? But why didn't you write to me? Then I'd have been the first to see you.

ROGER. But haven't I written to you, often?

SUZANNE. Often? Ten times. And then nothing but little insignificant notes at the bottom of

someone else's letter—the kind you'd write to a baby. I'm not a baby any longer: I've been thinking a lot these last six months; I've learned a heap of things.

ROGER. What have you learned? (Suzanne leans against his shoulder and cries) Why, Suzanne, what's wrong?

Suzanne. (Wiping her eyes and trying to laugh) And then I've worked—! Oh, how I worked! Piano, that horrid piano—I'm up to Schumann now, that's proper enough, isn't it?

ROGER. Oh!

Suzanne. Shall I play you something of his?

ROGER. Not now, later!

Suzanne. All right.—And I've learned so much!

ROGER. You are attending Professor Bellac's lectures, aren't you? So he's taken my place!

Suzanne. Yes, he's been so nice! I love him, too.

ROGER. Indeed!

Suzanne. Are you jealous of him?

ROGER. I?—

Suzanne. Tell me if you are; I'll understand. I'm so jealous! But why should you be? You're my father, aren't you?

ROGER. Oh, your father—

Suzanne. What's wrong? Be nice to me, the way you used to!

ROGER. The way I used to? Oh, no!

Suzanne. Yes, the way you used to! (She attempts to embrace him)

ROGER. No, no, no, Suzanne, don't do that!

Suzanne. Why not?

ROGER. Come now, that's enough! Run away now! (Sits down on the sofa)

Suzanne. I like you that way!

ROGER. Be a little bit reasonable.

Suzanne. Oh, we've had enough reasonableness for to-day. (She ruffles his hair, laughing)

ROGER. Run away, now! A big girl like you!—

SUZANNE. (*Jealously*) If I were only Lucy—

ROGER. Now, now! Please, dear!

SUZANNE. There, you said "dear." Forfeit! (*She sits on his knee and kisses him*)

ROGER. Again!

SUZANNE. All right; again! (*She kisses him*)

ROGER. (*Repulsing her as he rises*) This is too much!

SUZANNE. I'm an awful tease, am I not? Well, I'll get my note-books for you: they'll calm us down a little. (*She stops in the doorway and looks at him*) Oh, here are the ladies and M. Bellac! What! Lucy in an evening gown? Wait one moment! (*She runs out*)

ROGER. (*Agitated*) This is decidedly too much!

(*Enter the DUCHESS.*)

DUCHESS. Well?

ROGER. Well—

DUCHESS. How excited you look!

ROGER. You see, she was so affectionate—too affectionate!

DUCHESS. Yes, I advise you to complain! Look what I have found! (*She takes a mounted photograph from between the leaves of SUZANNE'S note-book*)

ROGER. A picture—

DUCHESS. Of the Professor, yes—

ROGER. In her note-book.

DUCHESS. But look here—

ROGER. May I—?

THE LADIES. (*Outside*) What a lovely lesson! Magnificent!

DUCHESS. There's the beautiful object! Surrounded by his bodyguard!

(*Enter BELLAC, MADAME ARRIÉGO, MADAME DE*

LOUDAN, MADAME DE SAINT-RÉAULT, MADAME DE CÉRAN, and LUCY.)

MME. DE SAINT-RÉAULT. Superb! Simply superb!

BELLAC. Oh, spare me, Madame de Saint-Réault!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Ideal! I call it ideal!

BELLAC. Marquise!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Beautiful! It stirred me to the depths of my being!

BELLAC. Oh, Madame Arriégo!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Ladies, there is only one thing to say about it all! M. Bellac was so eloquent that he was positively dangerous! But then—isn't he always a little dangerous?

BELLAC. Please, Madame de Loudan!

MME. DE LOUDAN. I'm simply mad about your genius! Yes, indeed, mad! And about you, too! Oh, I don't hide it. I tell everyone about it! Brazenly! You are one of the gods on my Olympus! You have become a fetish with me!

MME. ARRIÉGO. You know, I have his autograph in my locket! (*Displays locket*) There!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Shows a pen which she carries in the bosom of her gown*) And I carry one of his pens!

DUCHESS. (*Aside to ROGER*) Silly sheep!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*To MME. DE CÉRAN*) Ah Countess, I didn't see you at the lecture to-day?

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Introducing ROGER*) Here is my excuse! Ladies, my son!

LADIES. Ah, Count!

MME. DE LOUDAN. The exile has returned!

ROGER. (*Bowing*) Ladies!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Introduces BELLAC to her son*) Monsieur Bellac,—Count Roger de Céran!

MME. DE LOUDAN. I see that your excuse was a good one—but Lucy?

LUCY. I was busy here.

MME. DE LOUDAN. How could *you* stay away, his Muse?

BELLAC. (*Gallantly*) Ah, Marquise, I can only say, that *you* were there!

MME. DE LOUDAN. He is charming! (*To LUCY*) You don't know what you missed.

LUCY. Oh, I know—

..... MME. ARRIÉGO. No, she can have no idea!—It was a burning flame, a fire of passion!

MME. DE LOUDAN. What flowing eloquence! What delicacy of imagination!

BELLAC. With such an audience, who could not be eloquent?!

DUCHESS. And what was the subject to-day?

LADIES. LOVE!

DUCHESS. (*To ROGER*) Of course!

MME. ARRIÉGO. So poetic!

MME. DE LOUDAN. And so scientific! He is half psychologist, half dreamer; he plays with the scalpel as well as the lyre! It was—there was only one thing I couldn't agree with: that the basis of love is instinct.

BELLAC. But, Marquise, I was speaking of—

MME. DE LOUDAN. Oh, no, no—

BELLAC. I was speaking of love in Nature!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Instinct! The idea! Ladies, come, we must defend ourselves! Help me. Come to the rescue, Lucy!

BELLAC. She will not help you, Marquise; she agrees with me.

MME. DE SAINT-RÉAULT. Is it possible, Lucy?

MME. DE LOUDAN. Instinct?

MME. ARRIÉGO. In love?

MME. DE LOUDAN. That would be robbing the soul of its most precious possession: according to you, then, Lucy, nothing is good, or bad.

LUCY. (*Coldly*) There is no question about good, or bad, Madame, it is merely a question of the existence of the species.

LADIES. (*Protesting*) Oh!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) She's prosaic enough about it!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Indignantly*) Why, you're stripping love of all its romance!

LUCY. Hunter and Darwin—

MME. DE LOUDAN. No one better than I knows the weaknesses of the flesh. Matter dominates and masters us! I know it, I feel it! But leave us at least the psychic refuge of pure ecstasy!

BELLAC. But, Marquise—

MME. DE LOUDAN. Be quiet, you're a villain! I will not deny my God; that would be sacrilege—I'm very angry with you!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) Little fool!

BELLAC. I hope we shall be reconciled, after you read my book.

MME. DE LOUDAN. But when will that be? The entire world is waiting for that book! And you don't say a word about it! You won't even tell us the title!

LADIES. Tell us the title! At least the title!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Lucy, you make him tell us.

LUCY. Well, what is the title?

BELLAC. (*To LUCY, after a moment's hesitation*) "Miscellanies."

MME. DE LOUDAN. Oh, how lovely! But when does it appear?

BELLAC. I am hurrying it through the press, and I count on its helping me to the honor to which I aspire.

MME. DE CÉRAN. To which you aspire?

MME. ARRIÉGO. What more can he wish?

MME. DE LOUDAN. What more can the child of Fortune wish?

BELLAC. Poor Revel is on his last legs, you know. In the event of anything happening to him, I have announced myself as candidate for the position of director of the New School.

DUCHESS. (*To Mme. de CÉRAN*) Number three!

BELLAC. Ladies, if Revel should die—which God forbid!—I recommend myself to your good graces, and your influence.

LADIES. You may count on us, Bellac!

BELLAC. (*Approaching the DUCHESS*) And you, Duchess, may I hope——?

DUCHESS. You mustn't ask me anything before dinner. The weaknesses of the flesh “dominates me,” as Madame de Loudan says. (*The clock strikes*) There, you have only fifteen minutes! Get dressed at once, and we'll talk the matter over at table.

MME. DE CÉRAN. At table? But M. Toulonnier hasn't arrived yet, Duchess.

DUCHESS. That makes no difference to me. We dine sharp at six, whether he is here or not.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Dine without him, a General Secretary?

DUCHESS. Oh, under the Republic!

(Enter SUZANNE, with her notebooks under her arm; she puts them on the table, right.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. I am going to meet him. (*To BELLAC*) My dear Professor, you will be shown to your room. (*She rings and, a moment later, enter FRANCOIS*)

BELLAC. Pray don't trouble, Countess, I have the good fortune to know the way. (*Aside to LUCY*) Did you get my letter?

LUCY. Yes, but——

(BELLAC makes a sign for her to be silent, bows and goes out, right.)

MME. DE LOUDAN. And now, ladies, let us adjourn and make ourselves beautiful!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Come!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Come with me, Lucy.

LUCY. With pleasure, Madame!

MME. DE LOUDAN. In that gown? Are you not afraid of the seductive charm of this spring evening, my dear?

LUCY. Oh, I shan't be cold!

MME. DE LOUDAN. You are a true daughter of the Land of Fogs! I am very much afraid of the night air!

(MADAME DE LOUDAN *goes out with MADAME ARRÉGO, left. As LUCY starts to follow MADAME DE CÉRAN into the garden, she is intercepted by FRANCOIS.*)

FRANCOIS. I still can't find the pink paper, Mademoiselle.

SUZANNE. (*Picking up a pink paper which she has knocked off the table, while putting her notebooks on it. Aside*) A pink paper! (*She looks at the paper*)

LUCY. Ah yes, the letter we were looking for this morning!

SUZANNE. (*Aside, quickly hiding the letter behind her back*) That you were looking for this morning!

LUCY. (*As she is leaving the room*) Never mind looking for it, now. (*She goes out into the garden; FRANCOIS follows her*)

SUZANNE. (*Looking at LUCY. Enter ROGER*) The letter this morning!

(Enter the DUCHESS.)

DUCHESS. How's this? You're not ready yet? Nor you? What are you doing here?

(SUZANNE looks at ROGER without answering.)

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS*) Ah, these are the

notebooks! Give them to me, Suzanne. (*He goes to her, she hands them to him, looking at him in silence*) What's the matter with her?

DUCHESS. Let me look at those notebooks!

(ROGER goes to the DUCHESS, who is seated left.

SUZANNE, to the right of the table, tries to open the paper which she holds in her left hand, without being seen.)

ROGER. (Looking at SUZANNE; astonished) That's strange!

DUCHESS. (To ROGER, drawing him toward her) Come here, closer—my eyes are bad—

ROGER. (Lowering the notebooks, as he steals a glance at SUZANNE. Suddenly he seizes the DUCHESS by the arm, and whispers) Aunt!

DUCHESS. (To ROGER, aside) What's the matter now?

ROGER. Look! But don't turn your head! She's trying to read something! A letter, you see! She's trying to hide it, don't you see!

DUCHESS. Yes!

SUZANNE. (Who has opened the letter; reading) "I shall arrive Thursday." (Astonished) From Roger! The one Lucy got this morning! (She looks at the letter) But why is it written that way, without any signature? (Continues reading) "This evening at ten; in the conservatory. Say you have a headache." Ah!

DUCHESS. What can it be? (Calling) Suzanne!

SUZANNE. (Surprised; puts the letter behind her back, and goes toward the DUCHESS) Yes, Aunt?

DUCHESS. What are you reading there?

SUZANNE. I, Aunt? Nothing.

DUCHESS. I thought that—come here!

SUZANNE. (Slipping the letter under the books on the table, as she goes toward the DUCHESS) Yes, Aunt?

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) This is curious!

SUZANNE. (*Near the DUCHESS*) What is it, Aunt?

DUCHESS. Get my mantle for me.

SUZANNE. (*Hesitating*) But—

DUCHESS. You don't care to?

SUZANNE. Oh, certainly, Aunt!

DUCHESS. It's in my room; hurry! (*SUZANNE goes out. To ROGER*) Quick! On the table!

ROGER. What?

DUCHESS. The letter! She's hidden it! I saw her do it!

ROGER. Hidden it? (*He goes to the table and looks for the letter*)

DUCHESS. At the corner, there! Under the black book. Don't you see anything?

ROGER. No—oh, yes!—a pink paper. (*He takes the letter and brings it to the DUCHESS, reading it as he walks*) Oh!

DUCHESS. What is it?

ROGER. (*Reading*) "I shall arrive Thursday." From Bellac!

DUCHESS. (*Snatching the letter from him and reading it*) From—? But it isn't signed. And the handwriting—?

ROGER. Yes, disguised. Oh, he's a crafty one! But "I shall arrive Thursday" applies to me as well as to him!

DUCHESS. (*Reading*) "This evening at ten in the conservatory. Say you have a headache." A rendezvous! (*Giving him the letter*) Quick, put it back, I hear her coming!

ROGER. (*Agitated*) All right. (*Puts letter back in place*)

DUCHESS. Come now.

ROGER. Very well.

DUCHESS. Hurry up! (*ROGER resumes his position by the side of the DUCHESS*) And be calm! Here she is. (*SUZANNE re-enters. The DUCHESS*

turns over the leaves in the note-book) Well, these are very good, very good!

SUZANNE. Here's your mantle, Aunt.

DUCHESS. Thank you, dear. (*Aside to ROGER*) Speak up.

(*SUZANNE goes to the table, takes the letter, glances through it, turning away as before.*)

ROGER. (*Agitated*) There are—well—er—certain—you have made wonderful progress—er—I am astonished—(*Aside to DUCHESS, pointing to SUZANNE*) Aunt!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) Yes, she's picked it up again; I saw her. (*The dinner-gong sounds*) The second bell! Hurry and get dressed, Suzanne! You'll never be ready in time.

SUZANNE. (*Aside as she looks at ROGER*) A rendezvous! With Lucy! Oh!

(*She goes up to ROGER without saying a word and, looking him straight in the eye, takes her note-books out of his hand, tears them and throws the pieces angrily to the ground; then she goes out.*)

ROGER. (*Astonished; turning to the DUCHESS*) Aunt?

DUCHESS. A rendezvous!!

ROGER. With Bellac!!

DUCHESS. Nonsense!

ROGER. (*Falling into a chair*) Who could have imagined such a thing!!

(*Voices heard outside. The door at the back opens.*)

DUCHESS. (*Looking out*) Ah, here comes Toulonnier! And everybody, and dinner, too! Quick, go and dress! It will calm your nerves; you're very pale.

ROGER. Suzanne—!! It's not possible! (*He goes out*)

DUCHESS. No, it's not possible! And yet——!

(Enter MADAME DE CÉRAN, TOULONNIER, MON. and MME. DE SAINT-RÉAULT and, a moment later, LUCY, MADAME DE LOUDAN, MADAME ARRIÉGO, with BELLAC in their midst.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Introducing TOULONNIER to the DUCHESS*) The Secretary General, Aunt.

TOULONNIER. (*Bowing*) Madame la Duchesse!

DUCHESS. My dear Monsieur Toulonnier, we were just going to sit down without you.

TOULONNIER. I hope you will pardon me, my dear Duchess, but—business, you know! We are literally up to the ears in work. You'll permit me to leave early, I trust?

DUCHESS. With pleasure!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Embarrassed*) Ah, Monsieur Bellac!

TOULONNIER. (*To whom MME. DE CÉRAN introduces BELLAC*) Monsieur! (*He and BELLAC shake hands and talk*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Coming to the DUCHESS*) Be nice to him, Aunt; please.

DUCHESS. Your Republican friend? Nonsense! A man who gives us twenty minutes of his time as if he were a king! The idea!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You will at least allow him to escort you to the table?

DUCHESS. I should think not! Keep him yourself! I'll take little Raymond. He's much more amusing.

(Enter ROGER, dressed for dinner.)

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS with a frightened air*) Aunt!

DUCHESS. Well, what is it now?

ROGER. Oh, something—I just overheard something in the corridor upstairs. It's unbelievable.

DUCHESS. Well, what?

ROGER. I didn't see who was speaking, but I'm sure I heard—

(RAYMOND and JEANNE enter furtively.)

DUCHESS. Well, what?

ROGER. The sound of a kiss! What do you think of that?

DUCHESS. Of a what—?

ROGER. Yes, I'm sure I heard it!

DUCHESS. Well, who—?

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Introducing to TOULONNIER*)

Monsieur Paul Raymond, Sub-prefect of Agenis.

RAYMOND. Monsieur le Secrétaire-Général!
(*Introducing JEANNE*) Madame Paul Raymond.

(SUZANNE enters wearing an evening gown.)

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Seeing SUZANNE*) Ohh!

BELLAC. Ah, my young pupil!

(Murmurs of astonishment.)

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS*) Look, Aunt! *Décolletée!* It's disgraceful!

DUCHESS. I don't think so. (*Aside*) She's been crying.

FRANCOIS. (*Announcing*) Dinner is served.

ROGER. (*Approaching SUZANNE, who is conversing with BELLAC*) I must know! (*Offering her his arm*) Suzanne! (*SUZANNE looks at him coldly and takes the arm of BELLAC who is speaking with LUCY*)

BELLAC. (*To SUZANNE*) How the rest will envy me, Mademoiselle!

ROGER. (*Aside*) This is too much! (*He offers his arm to LUCY*)

DUCHESS. What does this mean?—Come, Raymond, give me your arm. (*RAYMOND approaches her*) My friend, one must suffer much, before one becomes a Prefect!

PAUL. The suffering is by no means unpleasant, Duchess.

DUCHESS. You're going to sit next to me at the table. We'll slander the Government!

PAUL. Oh, Duchess! And I one of her servants! Oh, no!—But there is nothing to prevent my listening to you!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

(*Same scene as ACT I.*)

(BELLAC, TOULONNIER, ROGER, PAUL RAYMOND, MADAME DE CÉRAN, MADAME DE LOUDAN, *the DUCHESS, SUZANNE, LUCY, JEANNE, seated in a semi-circle, listening to SAINT-RÉAULT who is finishing his lecture.*)

SAINT-RÉAULT. And make no mistake about it! Profound as these legends may appear because of their baffling exoticism, they are merely,— my illustrious father wrote in 1834—elemental, primitive imaginings, in comparison with the transcendental conceptions of Brahmin lore gathered together in the *Oupanischas*, or indeed in the eighteen *Paranas* of *Vyasa*, the compiler of *Veda*.

JEANNE. (*Aside to PAUL*) Are you asleep?

PAUL. No, no—I hear some kind of gibberish.*
 SAINT-RÉAULT. Such, in simple terminology, is the *concretum* of the doctrine of Buddha.—And at this point I shall close my remarks.

(*Murmurs. Some of the audience rise.*)

SEVERAL VOICES. (*Weakly*) Very good! Good!
 SAINT-RÉAULT. And now—(*He coughs*)
 MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Eagerly*) You must be tired, Saint-Réault?

SAINT-RÉAULT. Not at all, Countess!
 MME. ARRIÉGO. Oh yes, you must be; rest yourself. We can wait.

SEVERAL VOICES. You must rest!
 MME. DE LOUDAN. You can't always remain in the clouds. Come down to earth, Baron.

SAINT-RÉAULT. Thank you, but—well you see, I had already finished.

(*Everybody rises.*)

SEVERAL VOICES. So interesting!—A little obscure!—Excellent!—Too long!

BELLAC. (*To the ladies*) Too materialistic!

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) He's bungled it.

SUZANNE. (*Calling*) Monsieur Bellac!

BELLAC. Mademoiselle?

SUZANNE. Come here, near me.

(BELLAC goes to her.)

ROGER. (*Aside to the DUCHESS*) Aunt!

DUCHESS. (*Aside to ROGER*) She's doing it on purpose!

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*Coming to table*) One word more! (*General surprise. The audience sits down*

*Literally: "j'entends comme un vague auvergnat." The natives of Auvergne speak a very decided 'patois.'—Tr.

in silence and consternation) Or, rather a favor!—This study of mine, of which, in spite of the narrow limits and popular character made necessary by my audience—

DUCHESS. He is polite, isn't he?

SAINT-RÉAULT. The importance will perhaps have been realised,—this study, I say, was in 1821, sixty years ago, begun, or—I will go so far as to say, discovered by the genius whose son I have the honor to be—

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) He's standing in a dead man's shoes!

SAINT-RÉAULT. This trail which he has blazed, I, too, have followed, and not without distinction, if I may be permitted to say so. Another, coming after us, has tried to snatch a few words of wisdom from the eternal Verity of the Sphinx, until our time unfathomed in any theogony. I speak of Revel, highly esteemed both as scholar and gentleman. My illustrious father is dead, and Revel is not long for this earth—if he has not already passed away. Therefore I alone am left monarch of this new domain of science of which my father, Guillaume Eriel de Saint-Réault was the discoverer. I, alone! (*Looking at TOULONNIER*) May those who govern us, those who are invested with power and authority, those upon whom will devolve the delicate task of choosing a successor to our lamented colleague—whom perhaps we shall mourn to-morrow—may these eminent men (*Looking at BELLAC, who is speaking with TOULONNIER*) in spite of the more or less legitimate solicitations to which they are a prey, make an impartial, enlightened choice, determined solely by the three-fold requirements of age, aptitude and acquired perquisites—a choice of a successor worthy of my illustrious father, and of the great work which is his,—and of which, I repeat I am the sole living representative.

(*Everyone rises. Applause and general confusion. Meanwhile servants enter with refreshments.*)

SEVERAL VOICES. Splendid! Bravo!

PAUL. At last I understand what he's driving at!

MME. DE CÉRAN. A candidate for Revel's place!

BELLAC. In the Academy, the New School, in everything!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Aside*) I might have expected it!

SERVANT. (*Announcing*) The General, Comte de Briais!—Monsieur Virot!

(*Enter the GENERAL and M. VIROT.*)

GENERAL. (*Kissing MADAME DE CÉRAN's hand*) Countess!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Ah, Senator—

VIROT. (*Kissing MADAME DE CÉRAN's hand*) Madame la Comtesse!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To VIROT*) Too late! my dear Deputy, too late!

GENERAL. (*Gallantly*) One cannot come too early to your salon, Countess!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Monsieur de Saint-Réault was speaking; can one say more?

GENERAL. (*Bowing to SAINT-RÉAULT*) My loss!

VIROT. (*Taking the GENERAL to the left*) Well, Senator, if the House passes the law, will you vote it down?

GENERAL. Of course—at least the first time! The Senate must do that much.

VIROT. Ah! Duchess!

(*Together with the GENERAL they go to greet the DUCHESS.—PAUL RAYMOND and JEANNE slip out of the room into the garden.*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To SAINT-RÉAULT*) You surpassed yourself this evening, Saint-Réault!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Yes, you surpassed yourself. There is no other word for it.

MME. DE LOUDAN. Ah, Baron, Baron, what a world you have opened up to us! How captivating are these first stammering professions of primitive faith!! And that Buddhist Trinity, oh, I'm quite mad about it!

LUCY. (*To SAINT-RÉAULT*) Pardon my boldness, Monsieur, but in your enumeration of the Sacred Books, it seemed to me that you omitted something.

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*Piqued*) Ah, you think so, Mademoiselle?

LUCY. I did not hear you mention either the *Mahabarata*, or the *Ramayana*.

SAINT-RÉAULT. But those are not the Sacred Books, they are merely poems whose ancient origin rendered them objects of veneration for the Hindoos. They are works of literature, merely.

LUCY. But nevertheless, the Academy of Calcutta—

SAINT-RÉAULT. I merely give you the opinion of the Brahmins! You have another of your own?

SUZANNE. (*Loudly*) Monsieur Bellac!

BELLAC. Mademoiselle?

SUZANNE. Give me your arm; let's take a little walk, I want the air!

BELLAC. But—Mademoiselle—

SUZANNE. Don't you wish to?

BELLAC. But just at this time—?

SUZANNE. Do come! (*She almost drags him out*)

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS*) She's going out with him!

DUCHESS. Follow them!—Wait, I'll go with you—I need a breath of air myself; he's put me to sleep with his Brahmins, the old fakir! (*They go out*)

TOULONNIER. (*To SAINT-RÉAULT*) Very learned and full of new ideas—(*In an undertone*) I caught that hint of yours, my dear Baron. There was really no need. We are all on your side. (*They shake hands*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To SAINT-RÉAULT*) I beg your pardon! (*Aside to TOULONNIER*) You won't forget my boy?

TOULONNIER. I shall no more forget my promise than—I will yours.

MME. DE CÉRAN. You understand, you will receive your six votes in the Senate. You understand also that on the publication of his report—

TOULONNIER. You are well aware, Countess, that we are all on your side.

PAUL. (*To JEANNE, as they come in from the garden*) That time they *did* see us!

JEANNE. It was too dark to see anything under the trees.

PAUL. We were almost caught before dinner. Twice would be too much! I don't want to risk it.

JEANNE. Didn't you promise to kiss me every time we were in the dark? Yes or no?

PAUL. (*Excitedly*) Do you want to be a wife of a Prefect or not? Yes or no?

JEANNE. (*Equally excited*) Yes,—but meanwhile I'm not going to be his widow!

(MADAME DE CÉRAN *goes to them.*)

PAUL. (*Aside to JEANNE*) The Countess! (*Aloud*) Really, Jeanne, you prefer the *Bhagavata*?

JEANNE. Oh, the *Bhagavata*, my dear—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Did you understand any of that mass of erudition, Madame? Poor Saint-Réault seemed particularly wordy and obscure this evening!

PAUL. (*Aside*) The jealous rival!

JEANNE. But towards the end, Countess, he was clear enough.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Ah, yes, about his candidacy; you understood?

JEANNE. Well, after all, if faith requires science to support it, has not science some need of faith?—as Monsieur de Maistre has said.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Very good indeed! I must introduce you to a gentleman who will be very useful to you: General de Briais, the Senator.

JEANNE. And how about the Deputy, Countess?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, the Senator is more powerful!

JEANNE. But the Deputy is more active!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Really, my dear Raymond, you are very fortunate. (*Pressing JEANNE's hand*) and so am I! (*To JEANNE*) Good—I'll introduce you to both!

PAUL. (*Following JEANNE, who follows MADAME DE CÉRAN*) Angel!!

JEANNE. Aren't we going where it's dark pretty soon?

PAUL. Yes, my angel, but wait until the rest are gone! I'll tell you: while the tragedy is being read!

SERVANT. (*Announcing*) Madame la baronne de Boines—Monsieur Melchior de Boines!

(*Enter MME. DE BOINES and MELCHIOR.*)

BARONESS. (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN, who is about to receive her*) Ah, my dear, I am in time?

MME. DE CÉRAN. You are too late for Science, too early for Poetry! I am waiting for my poet.

BARONESS. Who is he?

MME. DE CÉRAN. An unknown.

BARONESS. Young?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I know nothing whatsoever about him, but I am assured that this is his first

work. Gaiac is bringing him—you know Gaiac, of the *Conservateur*? They should have been here at nine. I can't imagine what keeps them.

BARONESS. I shall profit by the circumstance, for I came to see neither scholar nor poet. I came to see *him*, my dear: Bellac! Think of it, I've never met him! He is so attractive, they tell me! Princess Okolitch is quite mad about him, you know. Where is he? Oh, show him to me, Countess.

MME. DE CÉRAN. I was just looking for him, and I—(*Seeing BELLAC enter with SUZANNE*) There!

BARONESS. Is that he, coming in with Mlle. de Villiers?

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Astonished*) Yes!

BARONESS. How lovely he is, dear! Isn't he handsome! And you let him go about with that young girl!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Aside—looking at SUZANNE and BELLAC*) That's strange—

MELCHIOR. And may I shake hands with Roger?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I doubt if you can at this moment. He must be hard at work just now. (*Enter DUCHESS and ROGER. Aside, looking at these latter*) What's this—and with the Duchess?

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS, greatly agitated*) Well, did you hear, Aunt?

DUCHESS. Yes, but I saw nothing.

ROGER. It was certainly a kiss, that time!

DUCHESS. And a good smack! Who could there be here who would kiss like that?

ROGER. Who, indeed?

DUCHESS. (*Seeing MADAME DE CÉRAN, as she approaches them*) Your mother!

MME. DE CÉRAN. How is this, Roger, aren't you supposed to be at work?

ROGER. No, Mother, I—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Well, well, what about your *Tumuli*?

ROGER. I have plenty of time: I can work on it to-night, and later in the week.

MME. DE CÉRAN. The idea! The minister is waiting!

ROGER. Let him wait, Mother! (*He goes away*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Stupefied*) Duchess, what does this mean?

DUCHESS. Tell me, isn't someone going to read us some sort of nonsense this evening? Some tragedy—?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Yes.

DUCHESS. Your reading is to be in the next room, isn't it? Get the people out of here, will you? I shall need this room, as soon as possible.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Why?

DUCHESS. I'll tell you that during the traegdy.

SERVANT. (*Announcing*) Monsieur le Vicomte de Gaiac! Monsieur des Millets!

(Enter DE GAIAC and DES MILLETS.)

DUCHESS. Well—I—look at your poet! There he is!

SEVERAL VOICES. The poet!—The young poet!—Where?—Where is he?

GAIAC. Will you ever forgive me, Countess? I was kept at the office, (*Aside*) I was writing up your *soirée*!—Monsieur des Millets, my friend the tragic poet, whose talent you will soon have an opportunity of appreciating.

DES MILLETS. (*Bowing*) Madame la Comtesse!

DUCHESS. (*To ROGER*) So that is the young poet! He's an odd one!

MME. ARRIÉGO. (*Aside to the other ladies*) How awful!

BARONESS. He's gray!

MME. DE SAINT-RÉAULT. Bald!

MME. DE LOUDAN. He has no talent: he's much too ugly, my dear!

MME. DE CÉRAN. We are very happy, Monsieur, my guests and myself, to be favored with your presence!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Approaching him*) A virgin triumph, Monsieur! How grateful we are!

DES MILLETS. (*Confused*) Ah, Madame!

MME. DE CÉRAN. And it is really your first work, Monsieur?

DES MILLETS. Oh, I have written several poems!

GAIAC. Crowned by the Academy, Madame la Comtesse.

JEANNE. (*To PAUL, admiringly*) Crowned?!

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) *Mediocritas!*

MME. DE CÉRAN. And this is your first attempt in the realm of the drama? Ah well, maturity of years guarantees maturity of talent!

~~DES~~ MILLETS. Alas, Madame la Comtesse, the play was written fifteen years ago!

LADIES. Fifteen years!—Is it possible?—Really?

GAIAC. Ah, Des Millets has faith in his work! We must encourage those who have faith, should we not, ladies?

MME. DE LOUDAN. Of course! We must encourage the tragic form, must we not, General? Tragedy—

GENERAL. (*Interrupting himself in his conversation with VIROT*) Eh? Oh, yes, tragedy! “Horace!” “Cinna!” Of course we must! Tragedy is necessary for the masses—(*To DES MILLETS*) May we have the title?

DES MILLETS. *Philippe-Auguste!*

GENERAL. Fine subject! Good military subject!—In verse, isn't it?

DES MILLETS. Oh, General! A tragedy—!

GENERAL. A good many acts, I suppose?

DES MILLETS. Five.

GENERAL. Ha! Ha! Good! Good!

JEANNE. (*Aside to PAUL*) Five acts! How lovely! We'll have plenty of time——!

PAUL. Sh-h!

MME. DE LOUDAN. The road to Parnassus is long!

MME. DE SAINT-RÉAULT. What a mighty effort!

MME. ARRIÉGO. That must be encouraged!

(SUZANNE'S *laugh* is heard above the murmur of the conversation.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Suzanne!

DUCHESS. (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN*) Lead out your Euripides and his press agent! Get rid of the lot of them!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Now ladies, shall we go into the large drawing-room and hear the reading? (*To DES MILLETS*) Are you ready, Monsieur?

DES MILLETS. As you like, Madame la Comtesse.

PAUL. (*Aside to JEANNE*) Age before beauty!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Come, ladies!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Intercepting her way*) Oh, but first, Countess, let us—the ladies and me—carry out our little plot! (*Going to BELLAC, and saying with an air of supplication*) Monsieur Bellac?

BELLAC. Marquise?

MME. DE LOUDAN. I want to ask a great favor of you.

BELLAC. (*Graciously*) The favor which you ask me becomes as nothing in comparison with the favor you do me in asking it so charmingly.

LADIES. Oh, how lovely!

MME. DE LOUDAN. This poetic tragedy will doubtless occupy the remainder of the evening; it will certainly prove a fitting climax!—Please say a few words beforehand—as few as you like! Of course, Genius must not be overtaxed! But, please, just a few words. They will be received like the Manna of old!

SUZANNE. Please, Monsieur Bellac!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Be generous!

BARONESS. We throw ourselves at your feet!

BELLAC. (*Defending himself*) Oh, ladies!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Come to our assistance, Lucy—you, his Muse! *You* plead with him!

LUCY. Of course; I ask him, now.

SUZANNE. And I, I want him to!

VOICES. Oh, oh!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Suzanne!

BELLAC. Well, since you force me—

MME. DE LOUDAN. Oh, he will! Quick, a chair!

(*Commotion about BELLAC.*)

MME. ARRIÉGO. A table?

MME. DE LOUDAN. Shall we make a circle?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Give him a little room, ladies.

BELLAC. Pray, no formality—!

VIROT. (*To the GENERAL*) You must be careful, the law is very popular.

LADIES. Sh-h!

BELLAC. Please, no stage-setting—nothing that—

VIROT. Well, yes—but the voters?

GENERAL. My position is perfectly safe!

LADIES. Sh-h! Oh, General!

BELLAC. Nothing evocative of the school-room, the platform, or pedantry. Please, ladies, let it be an informal chat: ask me questions.

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*With clasped hands*) Oh, Monsieur Bellac, tell us about your book!

MME. ARRIÉGO. (*With clasped hands*) Yes, the book!

BARONESS. (*With clasped hands*) Your book, yes!

SUZANNE. (*With clasped hands*) Oh, Monsieur Bellac!

BELLAC. Irresistible supplications! And yet I must protect myself; until everyone shall have the opportunity of seeing my book, no one shall.

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*With meaning*) Mm—no one?

BELLAC. Ah, Marquise, "Take care! There may be a secret!" as Fontenelle said to Mme. de Coulanges.

LADIES. Charming! Charming!

BARONESS. (*Aside to MME. DE LOUDAN*) How clever!

MME. DE LOUDAN. He is more than clever.

BARONESS. What then?

MME. DE LOUDAN. His wit has wings; you'll see.

BELLAC. This is neither the time nor the place, you will admit, ladies, to plumb the depths of certain of those eternal problems and mysterious enigmas of life and the Beyond which harass and torment noble souls, like your own!

LADIES. Ah, the "Beyond," my dear, the "Beyond!"

BELLAC. But, aside from this, I am quite at your service. There is one point, however, which comes to mind, a point which is eternally discussed and never settled, upon which I ask your leave to say a few words.

LADIES. DO, do!

BELLAC. I shall speak, then, with a threefold purpose:—first, to fulfil your request, ladies; (*Looking at MME. DE LOUDAN*)—to bring back a friend who has been led away—

BARONESS. (*Aside to MME. DE LOUDAN, who modestly drops her eyes*) That is you, my dear!

BELLAC. (*Looking at LUCY*) And to combat an adversary who has proved to be exceedingly dangerous—in more ways than one.

LADIES. That means Lucy!—It is Lucy!—Lucy!—

BELLAC. My subject is—Love!

LADIES. (*Approving*) Ahh!—Ahh!

DUCHESS. For a change!

SUZANNE. Bravo!

(*Low murmurs.*)

JEANNE. (*To PAUL*) That young lady is feeling very fit, it seems!

BELLAC. Concerning love!—The weakness which is a strength!—The sentiment which is a faith! The only religion, perhaps, which knows no scoffers!

LADIES. Ah!—Charming!—Charming!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*To the BARONESS*) Ah, the wings, my dear—the wings!

BELLAC. I spoke this morning—in the course of my lecture on German Literature at the Princess's—of a certain philosopher who made instinct the basis and the rule of all our actions and all our thoughts.

LADIES. (*Protesting*) Oh!—Oh!—Oh!

BELLAC. And now, ladies, I take the occasion emphatically to declare that that opinion is not my opinion, and that I deny the theory with every fiber of my soul and being!

LADIES. Good! Excellent!

BARONESS. (*Aside to MME. DE LOUDAN*) What pretty hands!

BELLAC. No, ladies, no! Love is not, as the German Philosopher has it, a purely specific passion; a deceitful illusion blinding mankind in order to arrive at its own ends, no! a hundred times no! if we have souls!

LADIES. Yes!—Yes!—

SUZANNE. Bravo!

DUCHESS. (*Aside to ROGER*) She is certainly doing that on purpose!

BELLAC. Leave to the Sophists and to vulgar natures such soul-stunting theories; do not even consider them; answer them with silence, the language of the outcast!

LADIES. Charming!—Charming!—

BELLAC. God forbid I should go so far as to

deny the sovereign influence of beauty over the uncertain wills of men! (*Looking about him*) I see too much about me by way of refutation to that argument!

LADIES. Ah!—Ah!

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS*) He looked at *her*!

DUCHESS. Yes.

BELLAC. But above this material and mortal beauty, there is another, time-defying, invisible to the naked eye, which the soul of purity serenely contemplates and cherishes with an unearthly love. That love, ladies, is the true Love, the mingling of two spirits, their flight far from the terrestrial mire—into the infinite blue of the ideal!

LADIES. Bravo!

DUCHESS. (*To herself, rather loudly*) Nonsense!

BELLAC. (*Looking at her*) That love, mocked at by some, unknown to most,—I declare, my hand on my heart, that it does exist! In the souls of the elect, as Proudhon says—

VOICES. (*Protesting*) Oh, Proudhon—!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Oh, Bellac!

BELLAC. A writer whom I am astonished to find myself quoting—I beg your pardons! In the souls of the elect, there is nothing of earth.

LADIES. How delicate! Charming!

DUCHESS. (*Bursting forth*) Nonsense!

LADIES. Oh, Duchess!

BELLAC. (*Bowing to the DUCHESS*) And yet, it exists. Noble spirits have felt it, great poets sung its praises, and in the seats of Heaven, the apotheosis of our dreams, we see, enshrined about with haloes of ethereal brightness, those immortal figures, everlasting proof of an immortal and psychic love: Beatrice, Laura—

DUCHESS. Laura, the mother of eleven, my dear Monsieur!

LADIES. Duchess!

DUCHESS. Eleven! And you call her love psychic!

MME. DE LOUDAN. They were not Petrarch's, Duchess; let's have fair play.

BELLAC. Héloïse—

DUCHESS. Oh, she—

BELLAC. And their sisters of more recent date: Elvira, Eloa, and many others, known and unknown. That cohort of pure and unknown loves, is growing from day to day—I call all womankind to witness!

LADIES. Ah, my dear, how true!

BELLAC. The soul has a language all its own; its aspirations, its pleasures and its tortures belong to it: are its very existence. And if it be chained to the body, it is like the wing of a bird: in order to raise it to the heights!

LADIES. Ah, bravo!

BELLAC. (*Rising*) This is what modern science ought to take into consideration—(*Looking at SAINT-RÉAULT*) that science which a leaden materialism drags down to earth—I shall add, since our venerable master and friend made an allusion not long since—perhaps a trifle over-hasty—to a loss which science, I hope, will not have to complain of—I shall add—(*Looking at TOULONNIER, to whom SAINT-RÉAULT is speaking*) in fine, this is what *he* should teach to the youth who have been under the guidance of Revel, he—whoever he may be—who will be chosen to carry on the work; and not only (asking the pardon of our illustrious colleague) upon the insufficient authority vested in those who have “acquired the right;” or erudition, or age—ought he to base his claim, but upon the irresistible power of a mind imbued with the spirit of youth and of a fiery ardor which is not to be extinguished!

VOICES. Bravo!—Charming!—Exquisite!—Delicious!

(Everyone rises. Confused murmurs of conversation. The ladies surround BELLAC.)

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) That for you, Saint-Réault!

PAUL. (*Aside*) Candidate number two!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Ah, Monsieur Bellac!

SUZANNE. Dear Professor!

BARONESS. A veritable banquet of the soul!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Beautiful!

BELLAC. Oh, ladies, I have but given words to your ideas!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Flatterer! Charmer!

BELLAC. Are we reconciled yet, Marquise?

MME. DE LOUDAN. How can one be angry with you? (*Introducing the BARONESS*) Madame la Baronne de Boines—another conquest! She is at your feet already!

BARONESS. You made me weep, Monsieur.

BELLAC. Oh, Madame la Baronne!

MME. ARRIÉGO. Isn't it superb!

BARONESS. Superb!

SUZANNE. And how warm he is! (BELLAC looks for his handkerchief) You haven't one? Here! (*She gives him her handkerchief*)

BELLAC. Oh, Mademoiselle!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Suzanne! The idea!

SUZANNE. (*To BELLAC, as he returns her handkerchief*) Oh, keep it, I'm going to get you a drink.

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Going toward the table before which SAINT-RÉAULT spoke, upon which is a tray and glasses of sugar-and-water*) Here, drink!

ROGER. (*Aside to the DUCHESS*) Look, Aunt!

DUCHESS. She's too brazen about it to be in earnest.

BELLAC. (*Aside to LUCY*) And are you convinced?

LUCY. Oh, for my part, the concept of love—No, I'll tell you later!

BELLAC. In a little while?

LUCY. Yes—would you like a glass of water?
(*She goes up-stage*)

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Arriving with a glass of water*) No! Let me! The god must pardon me: I can offer you only water, as the secret of Nectar-making is lost!

MME. ARRIÉGO. (*Arriving with a glass of water*) A glass of water, Monsieur Bellac?

MME. DE LOUDAN. No, no—take mine! Mine!

MME. ARRIÉGO. No, mine!

BELLAC. (*Embarrassed*) Well, I—

LUCY. (*Handing him a glass of water*) Here!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Oh, he'll choose Lucy, I know!—I'm so jealous!—No, mine! mine!

SUZANNE. (*Arriving with another glass of water and forcing it upon BELLAC*) No, no, he'll take mine! Ha, ha! the fourth thief!

LUCY. But, Mademoiselle—!

MME. DE LOUDAN. (*Aside*) That little girl has impudence—!

ROGER. (*To the DUCHESS, indicating SUZANNE*) Aunt!

DUCHESS. What's the matter with her?

ROGER. It's just since Bellac has come!

(*The doors are opened and the large drawing-room is seen, lighted.*)

DUCHESS. At last! (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN*) take away your company,—now is your chance!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Come, ladies, our tragedy is about to be read! In the large drawing-room! After the reading we shall take tea in the conservatory.

LUCY, BELLAC and SUZANNE. (*Aside*) In the conservatory!

ROGER. (*Aside to the DUCHESS*) Did you notice Suzanne? She started!

DUCHESS. And so did Bellac!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Come, Ladies, the Muse is calling us.

(The guests pass slowly into the large drawing-room.)

GENERAL. *(To PAUL)* What is that, my dear Sub-prefect—three years!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Come, General!

GENERAL. *(Still talking with PAUL)* Ah, yes, Countess, the tragedy!—You are right, one must encourage Art!—Five acts! Oh!—

JEANNE. *(To PAUL)* It's settled then, about—later—?

PAUL. Yes, yes—It's settled.

GENERAL. *(Returning to PAUL)* Three years, you say, as Sub-prefect in the same place? And they say the government isn't Conservative!

PAUL. That's pretty good, Senator; excellent!

GENERAL. Oh!

TOULONNIER. *(To MADAME DE LOUDAN)* That's understood, Marquise! *(To MADAME ARRIÉGO)* At your service, my dear Madame!

BELLAC. *(To TOULONNIER)* Well, General Secretary, may I hope—?

TOULONNIER. *(Giving him his hand)* It is merely what is due to you; you may count on us! *(He goes off)*

GENERAL. *(As he comes down to PAUL)* And what is the spirit of your *Département*,* my dear Sub-prefect? By Jove, you ought to know it, after three years!

PAUL. Well, General, its spirit—why, it—the—its spirit—it hasn't any!! *(They go out at the back. As SUZANNE passes the piano she runs her hand across the keys, making a terrible noise)*

MME. DE CÉRAN. *(Severely to SUZANNE)* But, Su-zanne! What—!

* Modern France is divided into ninety-seven "Départements" which roughly correspond to the states in the United States.—Tr.

SUZANNE. (*As if astonished*) What is it, Cousin?

DUCHESS. (*Stopping her and looking into her face*) What is the matter with you?

SUZANNE. (*With a nervous smile*) Me? Oh, I am just amusing myself!

DUCHESS. What is the matter with you?

SUZANNE. Nothing, Aunt, I tell you I am just amusing myself!

DUCHESS. What is the matter with you?

SUZANNE. (*Stifling a sob*) Oh, I feel so badly! (*She goes into the large drawing-room and slams the door violently after her*)

DUCHESS. She's in love, or I'm no judge—and I am a judge!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To the DUCHESS*) But what is the matter—? (*To ROGER*) Why aren't you at work on your report? What has happened? Please?!

ROGER. You were right all the while!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Suzanne—?

ROGER. Suzanne—and that man!!

DUCHESS. Stop! You're going to say something foolish!

ROGER. But I—

DUCHESS. (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN*) We discovered a letter in her possession.

MME. DE CÉRAN. From Bellac?

DUCHESS. I haven't the slightest idea.

ROGER. What?!

DUCHESS. Disguised handwriting—unsigned—not the slightest idea!

ROGER. Oh, you must have! He's not running any risks.—I say—

DUCHESS. (*To ROGER*) Keep still! (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN*) Listen to this; "I shall arrive Thursday—"

ROGER. To-day!—Therefore either he or I wrote that letter!

DUCHESS. Will you be still? "This evening at ten, in the Conservatory."

ROGER. "Say you have a headache."

DUCHESS. Oh, yes, I forgot: "Say you have a headache."

MME. DE CÉRAN. Why, it is a rendezvous!

DUCHESS. There's no doubt about it.

MME. DE CÉRAN. With *her*!

DUCHESS. I don't know about that!

ROGER. But I think—

DUCHESS. You think! You think!—When it comes to accusing a woman,—it's not enough to "think," you must *see*, and when you have seen, and seen and seen again—then, well then,—it's not true anyway! (Aside) It's good to say these things to the young!

MME. DE CÉRAN. A rendezvous, what did I tell you?! Well, well, what more could be expected of her, after all? And in my house! Like a girl of the streets! Now, Duchess, what are you going to do, tell me that? I asked them to begin in there without me, but I can't wait here all evening! I hear the poet; they've begun. Please, what are you going to do?

DUCHESS. Do? Stay here.—Quarter to ten; if she keeps the appointment she must come through here, and then I'll see him.

ROGER. But if she goes, Aunt?

DUCHESS. If she goes, my dear nephew? Well! I shall go too! And without saying a word, I'll see where they go. And when I see how matters stand, then and then only, will it be time to act.

ROGER. (Sitting down) I'll wait.

MME. DE CÉRAN. It's useless for you to wait, my dear, we are here. You have your *Tumuli*, run along! (She urges him to the door)

ROGER. Please, mother! It's a matter that—

MME. DE CÉRAN. It concerns your position. Go now, run away!

ROGER. (*Resisting*) I should be very sorry to have to disobey you, but—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Now, Roger!

ROGER. Please, mother!—I couldn't write a line this evening, I am too—I don't know what—I am very disturbed—My conscience tells me that I have not acted toward that young girl as I ought. I'm very—Think of it, Mother,—Suzanne!—It would be awful—!! I am in a fearful position—

DUCHESS. Surely you exaggerate!

ROGER. (*Flaring up*) Really!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Roger! What do you mean!

ROGER. I am her tutor; it is my duty to look after her moral welfare!—Think of my responsibility—that child's honor is in my hands! It is a sacred charge placed in my keeping; if I violate my trust I should be worse than a criminal. And then you talk to me about *Tumuli!* *Tumuli!* *Tumuli!* The devil take the *Tumuli*!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Terrified*) Oh!

DUCHESS. Well, well!

ROGER. And I say, if this is true, if that cad has dared to take advantage of our hospitality and her innocence!—I'm going straight to him—and demand a public apology, do you hear?

MME. DE CÉRAN. My son!

ROGER. Before everyone!

MME. DE CÉRAN. This is madness!—Duchess, forgive him, he's—

DUCHESS. Oho! I like to see him like that, you know—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Roger!

ROGER. No, mother, this is my affair—I'll wait here. (*He sits down*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Very well, then, I'll wait, too.

ROGER. You?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Yes, and I'll talk to him.

DUCHESS. But be careful!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, I'll be careful enough;

but if she persists, I shall let her have my opinion on the subject! I'll wait. (*She sits down*)

DUCHESS. Not long! Five minutes to ten! If she is going to have her headache, it is due about now. (*The door at the back swings open slowly*)
Shhh—

ROGER. There she is!

(*As the door opens, the voice of the poet is heard declaiming.*)

POET. (*Outside*) "Then let me cleanse the earth
of this vile brood!

Death's portals shall not check my vengeance, nor
Shall I retreat before the yawning grave—"

(JEANNE appears; closes the door.)

DUCHESS. The Sub-prefect's wife!

JEANNE. (*Astonished at seeing them*) Oh!

DUCHESS. Come in, don't be afraid. It would
seem that you have had enough?

JEANNE. Oh no, Duchess, but you see, I—

DUCHESS. You don't care for tragedy?—

JEANNE. Oh, yes I do!

DUCHESS. Oh, you needn't say so to be polite;
there are seventeen others who feel as you do!
(*Aside*) What can she be up to?—It wasn't in-
teresting, was it?

JEANNE. Quite the contrary!

DUCHESS. "Quite the contrary," as you say to
the person who asks you whether it hurt when he
stepped on your corn?

JEANNE. Oh, not at all! There were some very
interesting things—there was one beautiful line.

DUCHESS. A whole line?

JEANNE. And the applause was great. (*Aside*)
What shall I do?

DUCHESS. Ha! Ha! What was the beautiful
line?

JEANNE. "Honor is like a god, a god which—" I'm afraid I misquote it, and spoil the effect.

DUCHESS. Keep it, my child, keep it! And now you're running away like this in spite of the beautiful line?

JEANNE. I very much regret having to leave. (*Aside*) What shall I say? (*Brightening*) Oh!—it was either that I was so uncomfortable where I was sitting, or because it was so warm—I don't feel very well!

DUCHESS. Ah!

JEANNE. My eyes are—I can't see straight—I have a headache—

MME. DE CÉRAN, DUCHESS, ROGER. (*Rising*) A headache?!

JEANNE. (*Alarmed, aside*) What's the matter with them?

DUCHESS. (*After a short pause*) That's not surprising: there is an epidemic of headaches.

JEANNE. You have one too?

DUCHESS. I? No! One doesn't have them at my age! You must do something for it, my child.

JEANNE. I'm going to take a little walk. You'll excuse me, won't you?

DUCHESS. Of course; by all means!

JEANNE. (*Holding her head between her hands, and going toward the door*) Oh, how it aches! Ah! (*Aside*) Paul will find an excuse to get away! (*She goes out through the door leading to the garden*)

DUCHESS. (*To ROGER*) Do you think so? Do you think so?

ROGER. Oh, Aunt, it's only a coincidence!

DUCHESS. Possibly; you know how easily one may be mistaken, and one must never—(*The door of the drawing-room opens*) Ahh, this time!

VOICE OF THE POET. (*Heard through the partially opened door as before*)

"And though there were a hundred, nay a thousand——"

DUCHESS. Euripides is still at it!

VOICE OF THE POET.

"Unarmed, unaided, would I brave their threats,
And make the cowards own their cowardice!"

(LUCY appears.)

MME. DE CÉRAN and ROGER. Lucy!

(LUCY goes to the door leading into the garden.)

DUCHESS. What, Lucy, why did you leave the reading?

LUCY. (Stopping) I beg your pardon; I didn't see you!

DUCHESS. And yet they say there was a beautiful line:

"Honor is like a god——"

LUCY. (Starting to go) "Like a god which——"

DUCHESS. Yes, that's the one. (The clock strikes ten. LUCY is now at the door) And in spite of that, you are determined to go?

LUCY. Yes, I want a breath of fresh air, I have a headache. (She goes out)

DUCHESS, ROGER, and MME. DE CÉRAN. (Sitting down) Oh!

DUCHESS. Well, well! This is getting interesting!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Another coincidence!

DUCHESS. Another? No, not this time! Don't you think so?—Then all of them are! Except Suzanne's case! Come, now, there's something in the air. She will not come! I'm willing to wager she won't come. (The drawing-room door opens suddenly, and through it is heard a voice in the throes of tragic agony)

(Enter SUZANNE *hastily, as though looking for someone.*)

There she is!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (Rising) You are leaving the reading, Mademoiselle!

SUZANNE. (Impatiently) Yes, Cousin!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Stay here!

SUZANNE. But, cousin—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Stay! Sit down!

SUZANNE. (Dropping on to a piano-stool, and abruptly turning to each person who addresses her) Well?

MME. DE CÉRAN. And why, may I ask, did you leave the reading?

SUZANNE. Why should I let myself be bored by that old gentleman's reading?

ROGER. Is that the true reason?

SUZANNE. I went out because Lucy went out, if you must know!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Miss Watson, Mademoiselle?

SUZANNE. Yes, indeed: Miss Watson, the pink of perfection, the *rara avis*, she may do as she likes, but I—!

ROGER. You, Suzanne?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Let me speak to her! But you, Mademoiselle, run about the streets alone—!

SUZANNE. The way Lucy does!

MME. DE CÉRAN. And you dress most outrageously!

SUZANNE. The way Lucy does!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You monopolise M. Bellac and talk to him affectedly—

SUZANNE. The way Lucy does! I suppose she doesn't speak to him, does she? And to Monsieur, too! (Indicating ROGER)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, but in private! You understand me perfectly.

SUZANNE. Let's not talk about "in private!"

When anyone has a secret, he *writes* it—(*Aside to ROGER between her teeth*) in a disguised hand!

MME. DE CÉRAN. What?

ROGER. (*Aside*) Aunt!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) Shh!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Well?

SUZANNE. Well, Lucy speaks to whomever she wishes; Lucy goes out whenever she wants to; Lucy dresses just as she likes. I want to do just like Lucy, because every one loves her!

MME. DE CÉRAN. And do you know why everyone loves her, Mademoiselle? Because, in spite of her plainness—a necessary consequence of her nationality—she is serious, dignified and cultured—

SUZANNE. (*Rising*) And what about me? Haven't I been all that? For the last six months up to this very evening at five o'clock, I worked hard without resting, and I studied as much as she did; and I learned as much as she did: "objective" and "subjective" and all that!! And what good did it all do me? Does anyone love me better for it?—Doesn't everyone always treat me just as if I were a little girl? Everyone!! Everyone!! (*Looking sidewise at ROGER*) Who pays any attention to me? Suzanne, Suzanne!! What does Suzanne count for! And all because I'm not an old English woman!—

ROGER. Suzanne—!

SUZANNE. Yes, defend her! Oh, I know what to do in order to please you! Here! (*Taking the DUCHESS's lorgnette and putting it up to her eyes and looking through it*) How esthetic! Schopenhauer! The Ego, the non-Ego! Et Cetera, nyah! nyah!

MME. DE CÉRAN. We can dispense with your impertinence, Mademoiselle!

SUZANNE. (*Bowing ceremoniously*) Thank you, cousin!

JENNIE. Certainly.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Yes, impertinence! and your absurd pranks—

SUZANNE. Well, what can you expect from a "street gamin" like me! No wonder I don't behave any better! (*A little excited*) Of course I misbehave! I do it on purpose and I'll continue to do it!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Not under my roof!

SUZANNE. I did go out with Monsieur Bellac, and I spoke with Monsieur Bellac, and I have a secret wth Monisieur Bellac!

ROGER. You dare—!

SUZANNE. And he knows more than you do! And he's more of a man than you are! And I like him better than you! I love him! I love him! I love him!

MME. DE CÉRAN. I sincerely hope that you do not realize the gravity of what you are saying!

SUZANNE. I *do* realise it!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Then listen to me! Before you commit any more of the follies you are planning to menace us with, think the matter over! You, least of all, Mademoiselle de Villiers, can afford to have a scandal connected with *your* name!

DUCHESS. Take care, take care!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Well, Duchess, she ought to know, at least—

SUZANNE. (*Holding back her tears*) I do know!

DUCHESS. You know? What?

SUZANNE. (*Throwing herself into the DUCHESS's arms and crying*) Aunt! Aunt!

DUCHESS. There, there, Suzanne, my child! (*To MME. DE CÉRAN*) That was considerate of you—to start that hare! (*To SUZANNE*) There, there, what is it you know? (*She takes SUZANNE on her knees*)

SUZANNE. (*Weeping and talking at the same time*) W-what? I—I don't know! But I do

know there is something against me—and there has been for a long time!—

DUCHESS. Why, what makes you think—?

SUZANNE. Nobody, everybody—People look at you and whisper and stop talking when you come into the room and kiss you, and call you poor little thing!—If you think children don't notice those things!

DUCHESS. (*Wiping her eyes*) Now, dear, dear!

SUZANNE. And it was just the same at the convent! I knew I wasn't like the other girls. Oh I could see that. They always talked to me about my father and my mother, and why—? Because I didn't have any! And once, during recess I was playing with a girl!—I don't remember what I'd done to her—She was furious—and all of a sudden she called me—"Miss Foundling!" She didn't know what it meant, neither did I! Her mother had told her the word in speaking about me. She told me afterward, after we had made up.—Oh, I was so unhappy! (*Sobbing*) We looked the word up in the dictionary but we didn't find anything—or we didn't understand—(*Angrily*) What did they mean? What have I done that makes me any different from anybody else? That everything I do is bad? Is it my fault?

DUCHESS. (*Kissing her*) No, my child, no my dear!—

MME. DE CÉRAN. I am sorry—

SUZANNE. (*Sobbing*) Well then, why does everybody blame me if it isn't my fault? Here I seem to be in the way! I know, I don't want to stay any longer. I am going! Nobody loves me!

ROGER. (*Deeply moved*) Why do you say that, Suzanne? It's not so. Everybody here—I—

SUZANNE. (*Angrily as she rises*) You!

ROGER. Yes, I? And I swear—

SUZANNE. You!—Go away from me! I hate you and I never want to see you again! Ever! Do

you hear! (*She goes toward the door leading into the garden*)

ROGER. Suzanne! Suzanne! Where are you going?

SUZANNE. I'm going for a walk! For that matter, I am going where I please!

ROGER. But why now? Why are you going out?

SUZANNE. Why? (*She comes down to him*) Why?? (*Looking him in the eye*) Why? I have a headache!!!! (*All rise. SUZANNE goes out.*)

~~ROGER.~~ (*Agitated*) Well, Aunt, it's clear now, isn't it?

DUCHESS. Less and less!

ROGER. I shall see him at once!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Where are you going?

ROGER. Merely to do as my aunt has suggested.—To get to the bottom of the affair. And I swear if that man—that if it's true—if he has dared—!!!

MME. DE CÉRAN. If he has I shall show him the door!

ROGER. If he has, I will kill him! (*He goes out, following SUZANNE*)

DUCHESS. If he has—I'll see that he marries her! Only, if it isn't true—well, we'll see! Come! (*She tries to make MME. DE CÉRAN go out. Loud applause is heard from the adjoining room; indistinct murmurs of conversation and moving of chairs*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Well,—

DUCHESS. What's that I hear? Another beautiful line? No, it's the end of the act. Quick, before they come in!!

MME. DE CÉRAN. But my guests!?

DUCHESS. They'll go to sleep again without your help! Come, come!

(*They go out.—The door at the back opens. Through it are seen guests in groups, with DES MILLETS in the centre of one.*)

LADIES. Beautiful!—Great Art!—Very noble!

PAUL. (*On the threshold of the door*) That act is charming! Don't you think so, General?

GENERAL. (*Yawning cavernously*) Charming! Four to come!

(PAUL *skilfully maneuvers so that he reaches the door leading to the garden and disappears through it.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE:—*A large conservatory, lighted by gas. A tiny fountain playing in the center of a basin; furniture, chairs, clumps of shrubbery; large plants behind which one might easily slip and hide.*

(*The DUCHESS and MME. DE CÉRAN enter, right. They look about carefully and consult together in low tones.*)

DUCHESS. No one?

MME. DE CÉRAN. No one.

DUCHESS. Good! (*She walks toward the center of the stage, then pauses*) Three headaches!

MME. DE CÉRAN. It's atrocious that I should be forced to leave the poet to—

DUCHESS. Oh, well, your poet is reading his poetry! A poet who can read his poems is happy enough!

MME. DE CÉRAN. But Roger's conduct has disturbed me! I have never seen him act that way. What are you doing there, Aunt?

DUCHESS. I'm stopping the water so that I can hear better, my dear.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Why?

DUCHESS. So that I can hear better, my dear!

MME. DE CÉRAN. He is in the garden somewhere—following her, watching for her—What will happen?—Oh, the poor little thing!—Why, Duchess! You are putting out the gas!

DUCHESS. No, I'm only turning it down.

MME. DE CÉRAN. Why?

DUCHESS. So that I can see better, my dear!

MME. DE CÉRAN. So—?

DUCHESS. Heavens, the less we are seen the more we'll see. Three headaches?—and only one rendezvous! Aren't you beginning to see, my dear?

MME. DE CÉRAN. But what I can't understand is that Monsieur Bellac—

DUCHESS. And what I can't understand is that Suzanne—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, she—

DUCHESS. She—? Well, you'll see! They may come now as soon as they wish—everything's ready.

MME. DE CÉRAN. If Roger finds them here—together—He might—

DUCHESS. Bah! Wait till you see! Wait until you *see*!

MME. DE CÉRAN. But—

DUCHESS. Shh! Didn't you hear something?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Yes!

DUCHESS. (*Pushing MADAME DE CÉRAN toward the plant at the right, down-stage*) Just in time!—Come!

MME. DE CÉRAN. What, you are going to listen?

DUCHESS. (*Hidden*) I should think so! There is nothing else to be done but to listen! There! In that corner we'll be snug as weasels. If it becomes necessary, we can come out, rest assured of that! Has somebody come in?

(JEANNE *enters quietly.*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Looking through the branches which hide her*) Yes!

DUCHESS. Which of the two?

MME. DE CÉRAN. It is *she*!

DUCHESS. Suzanne?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Yes! (*Astonished*) No!

MME. DE CÉRAN. No! She's not in *décolletée*.

It's someone else!

DUCHESS. Someone else? Who?

MME. DE CÉRAN. I can't distinguish!

JEANNE. But come on, Paul!

MME. DE CÉRAN. The little Sub-prefect's wife!

DUCHESS. Again!

(PAUL enters, right, at the back.)

JEANNE. What on earth are you doing to that door?

PAUL. (*Still in the corner, busied with something*) Necessity is the mother of invention!—I'm just inventing a little necessity.

JEANNE. What?

PAUL. That!

JEANNE. Eh? (*Nervously*)

PAUL. (*Coming in*) A great success!

JEANNE. What do you mean?

PAUL. That! A little burglar alarm I've just installed. Yes, a piece of wood in the door-hinge. By this means, if anyone should come—oh, not any one in love,—that would be hardly likely in this place!—but somebody who was trying to take refuge here and avoid the tragedy—there wouldn't be any danger. He gives the door a push, there is a squeak and we—whht!—by the other door, eh? Isn't that a clever invention? I tell you, we statesmen! And now, Madame, since we are at last sheltered from the eyes of the world, I shed the responsibilities of the public man: the private citizen reappears, and is ready for the flight of sentiment too

long concealed; I now permit you to call me Paul!

JEANNE. Oh, what bliss! You are too good,
PAUL!

PAUL. I am good because I am at peace; but, kissing me in the corridors you know,—the way you did when you came to unpack my trunk, that—

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) So it was they!

PAUL. And in the garden, this evening, too,—

DUCHESS. Again!

PAUL. Never again, please! It's entirely too imprudent for this house!—And what a place! Didn't I tell you? It's a shame that in order to become a Prefect one has to yawn himself to death in this palace of boredom!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Eh!?

DUCHESS. (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN*) Listen to that! Listen to that!

JEANNE. (*Drawing PAUL down beside her*) Come, dear!

PAUL. (*Sits down, then gets up and walks about, agitated*) What a house! And the hosts, and the guests, and everybody else! And Madame Arriégo! And that poet! And the Marquise! And that English ice-berg! And Roger the wooden man! The Duchess is the only one with any common-sense—!

DUCHESS. That for me!

PAUL. (*With conviction*) But the rest, oh my, oh my!

DUCHESS. And that for you!

JEANNE. Oh, come, dear, sit by me!

PAUL. (*Seating himself, and rising again as before*) And the lectures and the Literature! And Revel's candidacy! Clever old fox who keeps dying every evening and coming back to life every morning! (*He starts to sit down, then he pauses*) And Saint-Réault! Ah! Saint-Réault! And the *Ramas-Ravanas* and all the clap-trap about Buddha!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Indignantly*) Oh!

DUCHESS. (*Laughing to herself*) Oh, he's funny!

PAUL. And the other one, he's a wonder! Bellac of the many conquests, with his Platonic love!!

JEANNE. (*Dropping her eyes*) He's silly!

PAUL. (*Sitting*) Don't you think so? And that tragedy! Oh, that tragedy!

JEANNE. But, Paul, what is it?

PAUL. And old Phillippe-Auguste with his beautiful verse! Why, everybody has written verse! That's no reason why he should read it! I've done it myself!

JEANNE. You, dear?

PAUL. Yes, I! When I was a poor student I even used to sell it!

JEANNE. To a publisher?

PAUL. No, to a dentist! "The Fill-iad, Or the Art of Filling Teeth,"—Poem in three hundred lines!—Thirty Francs—Listen!

JEANNE. Oh, no!

PAUL. "O Muse, be there an ill, to man the greatest curse,
Which Heaven in its wrath, spreads o'er the universe,
And sorely, you'll admit, O muse, good taste offends,
It is that one which oft upon the teeth descends!"

JEANNE. Oh, Paul!!

PAUL. "Ah, to tear out that tooth, my cup of joy were full!
Nay, friend, it can be cured, stop! do not let them pull!
Oh, never pull a tooth, e'en when it rots—you'll rue it!"

Let it be filled; but choose a clever man to do it!
Protect that little tooth, bi-cusped or incisor,
'Twill sweeten every meal—'twill make your smile seem nicer!"

DUCHESS. (*Laughing*) Isn't he amusing!

JEANNE. What nonsense you talk! Who would ever believe it to see you in the drawing-room! (*imitating him*) Ah, yes, Monsieur le Sénateur, the tide of democracy—the treaties of 1815—Oh! Oh! OH!

PAUL. And you, dear! You certainly have made an impression on the hostess!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Hmm?

PAUL. My compliments!

JEANNE. But, deary, I only did what you suggested!

PAUL. (*Imitating her*) "I only did what you suggested!"—Ah, little Miss Saintliness with her little voice! Oh, you filled the Countess full!—of Joubert and Latin and Tocqueville and your own manufacture, too!

MME. DE CÉRAN. What, her own manufacture?

DUCHESS. She is lovely! I like her all the more!

JEANNE. Well, I don't feel any remorse—A woman who puts us in different rooms.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Rising*) And suppose I tell her to leave!

DUCHESS. Be still!

JEANNE. And it's just horrid of her! Yes, she does it on purpose! A woman knows very well that new-married people always—have things to say to each other.

PAUL. (*Tenderly*) Yes, always!

JEANNE. Always?—Really?—Always like this?

PAUL. What a sweet voice you have! I heard it a little while ago—talking about the treaties of 1815! Soft, sweet, all-enveloping—Ah, the voice is the music of the heart—as Monsieur de Tocqueville says!

JEANNE. Oh, Paul! I don't like you to laugh at such serious things!

PAUL. Oh, let me be a little nonsensical, please, dear! I'm so happy here! By Jove, just now I

don't care a rap whether I'm Prefect of Carcassonne or not!

JEANNE. It's always "just now" with me, Monsieur! That's the difference!

PAUL. Dear little wife! (*He kisses her hands*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. But, such impropriety, I nev—

DUCHESS. I can't say that I object to that!

PAUL. I have a lot of back accounts to settle before I even begin to collect for the present! When can we get away? Dear little girl, you don't know how I adore you!

JEANNE. Yes, I know—I can judge for myself!

PAUL. My Jeanne!

JEANNE. Oh, Paul, say it like that always! Always!

PAUL. Always! (*Close to her, and very tenderly*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. But, Duchess!!

DUCHESS. Oh! They're married, aren't they!

(*The door squeaks; PAUL and JEANNE spring up, startled.*)

JEANNE and PAUL. Eh?

JEANNE. Somebody's coming!

PAUL. We must flee!—as they say in the tragedy!

JEANNE. Quick! Quick!

PAUL. You see? My little invention!

JEANNE. So soon! What luck! (*They go out, right*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Going left*) Well, it is a fortunate thing that they were interrupted.

DUCHESS. (*Following her*) I'm sorry they went—but the funny part is over now!

(*BELLAC enters right, at the back; MADAME DE CÉRAN and the DUCHESS hide themselves, left.*)

BELLAC. What a noise that door makes!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*To the DUCHESS, as before*)
Bellac!

DUCHESS. Bellac!

BELLAC. One can't see very well here!

MME. DE CÉRAN. You see, it's true!—Everything is true!

DUCHESS. Everything? No!—Only a little bit.

MME. DE CÉRAN. The rest is far away.

DUCHESS. In any case, it's only a lark, a school-girl's frolic! It can't be that—(*The door squeaks*) There she is! Oh my, how my heart beats! In things like this, it's better to be sure; one can never tell—Can you see her?

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Peering out*) Yes, it's she; Roger will be here in a moment, on the look-out for them—Hadn't we better show ourselves, Duchess?

DUCHESS. No, no. I want to see where they stand. I want to catch them red-handed.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Still looking*) I'm dying of suspense—*Décolletée*—It's certainly she.

DUCHESS. Oh, the little coquette! Let me see! (*She looks through the leaves*) What's that?

MME. DE CÉRAN. What?

DUCHESS. Look!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Lucy!

DUCHESS. Lucy!

MME. DE CÉRAN. What does that mean?

DUCHESS. I don't know, but I like that better!

(PAUL and JEANNE re-enter, and BELLAC and LUCY conceal themselves, right. JEANNE is behind PAUL, holding him back.)

JEANNE. (*To PAUL*) No, no, Paul, no!

PAUL. Yes, yes! Let me go a second! I want to see! Nobody could be here but lovers, at this hour;—and yet, in this house! No, that would be too much!

JEANNE. Take care!

PAUL. Shhh!

LUCY. Are you there, Monsieur Bellac?

PAUL. The English girl!

BELLAC. Yes, Mademoiselle!

PAUL. And the Professor—The English girl and the Professor! It's impossible! Scandal! Would you believe it! An intrigue!—A rendezvous! We'll stay right here and see what happens!

JEANNE. What?

PAUL. After this, you don't mean to say you want to go?

JEANNE. Oh, no! (*They hide themselves behind the plants, at the back, left*)

LUCY. Are you on this side?

BELLAC. Here!—I beg your pardon! The conservatory is usually better lighted—I don't know why, this evening—(*He walks toward her*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Aside to the DUCHESS*) Lucy!—But what about Suzanne? I'm sure I can't make it out!

DUCHESS. Wait a while; we'll soon find out.

LUCY. But, M. Bellac, what do you mean by this? And your letter this morning? Why did you write me?

BELLAC. Because I wanted to talk with you, my dear Miss Lucy. Is this the first time we have left the others and talked, and exchanged ideas?

PAUL. (*Struggling to control his laughter*) Oh, exchange ideas! I never heard it called that before!

BELLAC. Surrounded as I am here, what other means had I of speaking with you, alone?

LUCY. What other means? You might simply offer me your arm and leave the room with me. I'm no French girl!

BELLAC. But you are in France.

LUCY. I may be in France, but I still do as I please. I have no use for secrets, much less such

mysteries as this! You disguise your handwriting, you did not sign your name, you even wrote on pink paper—how French you are!

PAUL. (*Aside to JEANNE*) He's a born villain!

BELLAC. How wonderful you are, austere Muse of Knowledge, superb Polymnia, proud nymph of the cold Pierian Spring—please sit down!

LUCY. No, no! Now see what all your precautions have come to: I have lost that letter!

DUCHESS. (*Rather loudly*) I see—!

(LUCY starts.)

BELLAC. What is it?

LUCY. Didn't you hear—?

BELLAC. No.—You say you lost—?

LUCY. What do you suppose the finder of that letter will think?

DUCHESS. (*Aside to MME. DE CÉRAN*) Now do you understand?

LUCY. Of course; there was no envelope or address—

BELLAC. Nor my handwriting nor my signature. You see I wasn't so stupid after all! In any case, my intentions were good, my dear Miss Lucy. Forgive your Professor, your friend, and—and—Sit down, please!

LUCY. No! Tell me what you have to tell me with so much secrecy, and we'll return to the drawing-room!

BELLAC. (*Retaining her*) Wait! Why didn't you come to my lecture this afternoon?

LUCY. Simply because I spent my time looking for that letter. What have you to say to me, now?

BELLAC. Are you very anxious to leave me? (*He gives her a packet of papers tied with a red ribbon*) There!

LUCY. The proofs!

BELLAC. (*Agitated*) Of my book!

LUCY. (*Also moved*) Of your—? Oh, M. Bellac!

BELLAC. It was my wish to have you see it before anyone else! You only!

LUCY. (*Taking his hand effusively*) Oh, my dear friend! My dear friend!

PAUL. (*As before*) Oh my, what a gift of love!

(BELLAC moves a little to the left.)

LUCY. What is it?

BELLAC. Nothing—nothing.—I thought—Read this book in which I have put my inmost thoughts, and you will find that we are in perfect accord, I am sure—except upon one point—Oh, that question—!

LUCY. Which?

BELLAC. (*Tenderly*) Is it possible that you really do not believe in Platonic love?

LUCY. I? Not in the least!

BELLAC. (*Graciously*) Very well, but what of our relations—?

LUCY. (*Simply*) Our relations? Friendship!

BELLAC. (*Playing with the idea*) I beg your pardon! More than friendship, better than love!

LUCY. Well, if it's more than the one and better than the other, then it's neither! And now, thank you once more; thank you a thousand times! But let us go back, shan't we? (*She starts to go*)

BELLAC. (*Retaining her*) Wait a moment!

LUCY. No, no, let us go back!

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) She won't take the bait!

BELLAC. (*Always holding her back*) Please wait, I beg you!—Two words! Two words! Explain to me, tell me—it's worth the trouble! Come, Lucy!

LUCY. Come, Bellac! (*Becoming animated, as she passes to the right*) But see, my friend, listen,

M. Bellac—your Platonic love has absolutely no philosophical basis—

BELLAC. Pardon me, that love is a kind of friendship—

LUCY. If it's friendship it is no longer love.

BELLAC. But it's a double concept!

LUCY. If it's double, it cannot be a unit!

BELLAC. But there is a fusion! (*He seats himself*)

LUCY. If it is a fusion, it has no longer an individuality. I'll explain my meaning—! (*She seats herself*)

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) She's swallowed the hook!

LUCY. I deny that any fusion is possible between love, which is based upon indivisibility, and friendship, which is largely composed of sympathy; that is to say, that in which the Ego becomes, in a way, the Non-Ego. I deny absolutely, absolutely—!

DUCHESS. (*To MME. DE CÉRAN*) I have often heard people talk about love, but never that way!

BELLAC. But, Lucy—

LUCY. But, Bellac—Yes or no, the principal factor—

BELLAC. But, Lucy—Here's an example: suppose two beings, two abstractions, two entities—any man, any woman,—who love each other, but with an ordinary physiological love—you follow me?

LUCY. Perfectly!

BELLAC. Let us suppose these two in the following circumstances; they are alone at night, together—what would happen?

DUCHESS. (*To MADAME DE CÉRAN*) I don't know, do you?

BELLAC. Without fail—now pay close attention—without fail, this phenomenon will take place.

JEANNE. (*To PAUL*) It's so funny!

PAUL. Do you think so, Madame?

BELLAC. Both of them, or more probably, one of them—the man—

PAUL. (*To JEANNE*) The male entity!

BELLAC. Would approach her whom he believes he loves—(*He approaches her*)

LUCY. (*Drawing back a little*) But—

BELLAC. (*Gently holding her*) No, no, you'll see! They gaze fixedly into each other's eyes, she feels his breath on her cheek, her hair brushes against his face—

LUCY. But, M. Bellac—

BELLAC. And then—and then, their Egoes mingle—independently of the Ego itself, an uninterrupted series of involuntary acts which, by a natural succession, progressing slowly and inevitably, hurls them, if I may be permitted the expression, into the maelstrom which, though foreseen, cannot be avoided—in which Reason and Soul are powerless!

LUCY. One moment! This process—

BELLAC. Listen, listen—! Suppose now another couple and another love: a psychological, not a physiological love—an exception;—you still follow me?

LUCY. Yes.

BELLAC. These two, seated side by side, come nearer to each other—

LUCY. (*Drawing away*) But that's the very same thing.

BELLAC. (*Bringing her back*) Listen to me: there is the slightest shade of difference. Let me illustrate: they too gaze into each other's eyes, and they too—

LUCY. Well—? (*She rises*)

BELLAC. (*Making her sit down*) But—but—They are oblivious of physical beauty: it is their souls which commune. They no longer hear each other's voices, but rather the palpitation of their thoughts! And then, finally, by an entirely different process—though springing from the same source—they too arrive at that obscure and turbulent state of mind in which the being is ignorant even of its

own existence—a delicious atrophy of the Will which seems the *summum* and the *terminus* of human happiness; they leave the earth to awaken in a free Heaven, for *their* love transports them far above the murky clouds of earthly passion into the pure Ether of the sublimely Ideal! (A pause)

PAUL. (To JEANNE) They're going to kiss!

BELLAC. Lucy!! Dear Lucy, don't you understand? Say that you understand me!

LUCY. (Troubled) But—it seems to me that these two concepts—

PAUL. Oh, the concepts! That's too much!

LUCY. The two concepts are identical.

BELLAC. (Passionately) Identical?! Oh, Lucy, you are cruel! Identical!? You must understand that in this case it is entirely subjective.

PAUL. Subjective! Oh, I say!

BELLAC. (Growing more excited) Subjective! Lucy! You must understand me!

LUCY. (Greatly moved) But, Bellac—subjective!

JEANNE. (To PAUL) He'll never kiss her!

PAUL. Then I'll kiss you!

JEANNE. (Defending herself) Paul! Paul!

(Kisses are heard.)

BELLAC and LUCY. (Getting up, frightened) What—?

DUCHESS. (Astonished; rising) What's this? Are they kissing?

LUCY. Someone—someone's there!

BELLAC. Come, take my hand!

LUCY. There's someone listening! I'm sure!

BELLAC. Come!

LUCY. I'm fearfully compromised! (She goes out at the back, left)

BELLAC. (Following her) I'll do all in my power—(He follows her out)

PAUL. (*Who, with JEANNE, comes out from the hiding-place*) Platonic love! Ha! Ha!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) Raymond!

JEANNE. The Ego! The process! The *terminus*! Ha! Ha!

DUCHESS. (*Leaving her hiding-place; aside*) Naughty children! Just wait! (*Quietly approaching them*)

PAUL. Oh, he's a regular *Tartufe*,* with his double-meanings! (*Imitating BELLAC*) "My dear Mademoiselle; Love is a double concept"—

JEANNE. (*Imitating Lucy*) "But the principal factor"—

PAUL. "But, Lucy"—

JEANNE. "But, Bellac"—

PAUL. "But there is the slightest shade of a difference—Let me illustrate"—

JEANNE. "But they are identical."

PAUL. "Identical! You are cruel! It is entirely subjective."

JEANNE. "Oh, Bellac, subjective."

(*The DUCHESS imitates the sound of kisses by clapping her hands.*)

PAUL and JEANNNE. (*Rising in alarm*) What—?

JEANNE. Someone!

PAUL. Caught!

JEANNE. Someone has been listening!

PAUL. (*Trying to take her away*) Come, come!

JEANNE. (*As they go out*) Perhaps they heard what we said before!

PAUL. "I'll do all in my power"—! (*They go out left*)

DUCHESS. (*Laughing*) Ha! Ha! Those ridiculous children! They're nice, but they deserve

* The principal character in Molière's famous comedy, "*Tartufe*," a hypocrite, whose name has become proverbial.

a lesson! I have to laugh!—Oh—Lucy—think of it!—She's all right! Ah, well, now do you see how matters stand! Suzanne—the rendezvous—the letter—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, it was Bellac's letter to Lucy that Suzanne found!

DUCHESS. She thought it was Roger's letter to Lucy; that is why she was so jealous, so furious!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Jealous? You don't mean to tell me she loves my son?

DUCHESS. Do you still want him to marry the other girl?

MME. DE CÉRAN. The other girl? Certainly not! But never Suzanne, Aunt, never!

DUCHESS. We haven't come to that yet! Meanwhile, go and take care of your tragic poet, and Revel's successor! I'll find your son for you, and see that he gets back his honor! All's well that ends well! Well I'm at ease now, after all this ado about nothing! But now it's over; let's go!

(*They are about to go out, left, when the door at the right opens.*)

DUCHESS and MME. DE CÉRAN. What's this——?

DUCHESS. Again! ? Your Conservatory is thick with them! This is lovely!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Who else can it be?

DUCHESS. Who? (*Struck with an idea*) Oh! (To MME. DE CÉRAN, placing her in a corner, left) Go back to the drawing-room; I'll tell you later.

MME. DE CÉRAN. But, I——

DUCHESS. You can't leave your guests all evening!

MME. DE CÉRAN. (*Trying to see the newcomers*) Who can it be——?

DUCHESS. (*Still urging her out*) I'll tell you everything. Quick now, before——You can't——

MME. DE CÉRAN. That's so. I'll come back for the tea.

DUCHESS. Yes, do that! Quick, quick, now!

(MME. DE CÉRAN *goes out, left.*)

DUCHESS. Who can it be? Roger, who is spying on Suzanne, or Suzanne, who is spying on Roger—*(Looking to the right)* Yes, it's he, my Bartholo—*(Looking to the left)* And my little jealous girl, who thinks Roger is with Lucy, and who would like to see how things are coming on. That's it. Headache number three: total quite correct! Oh, if Fortune doesn't make something out of this, she is insufferably stupid! *(Carefully turning down the gas)* We need a little added effect!

(Enter SUZANNE.)

SUZANNE. *(Hiding)* I knew very well when he had finished walking around the garden he would end here in the conservatory; he couldn't miss it!

(ROGER *enters.*)

ROGER. *(As he hides)* She's here, I saw her come in! I knew very well when she had finished walking around the garden she would end here in the conservatory!—Now I know what to expect!

DUCHESS. Hide-and-seek!

SUZANNE. *(Listening)* It seems that—his English lady is late!

ROGER. *(Listening)* Ahh! Bellac isn't here yet!

DUCHESS. They'll keep this up forever unless I stop it!—Sst!

ROGER. She's giving him a signal—Oh, if I only dared, I'd take his place, since he hasn't come. That's the way to find out how they feel toward one another!

DUCHESS. *(Aside)* Come, come!—Sst!

ROGER. Well, I might as well learn what I can!
—Ssst!

DUCHESS. Well!

SUZANNE. He thinks I'm Lucy!—Oh, I should like to know what he'd say to her!

ROGER. (*In an undertone*) Is it you?

SUZANNE. (*Softly*) Yes! (*Aside; resolutely*) I'll do it!

ROGER. She thinks I'm Bellac!

DUCHESS. Ahh!—Good! They're off! (*She disappears behind the plants at the back, left*)

ROGER. Did you get my letter?

SUZANNE. (*Aside; angrily*) Yes, I got your letter! I got it! And you had no idea that I did, either! (*To ROGER; sweetly*) How else should I have come to meet you——?

ROGER. (*Aside*) “Meet you”—! This is plain enough!—Oh, the poor child—Now we'll see!—(*To SUZANNE*) I was so afraid you wouldn't come, my dear——

SUZANNE. (*Aside*) “My dear!” Oh! (*To ROGER*) And yet you saw me leave the drawing-room a moment ago, my dear!

ROGER. (*Aside*) They're on very familiar terms, aren't they? There's no denying that! I've got to know!—(*To SUZANNE*) Why don't you come nearer? (*He approaches her*)

SUZANNE. (*Aside*) Oh, he'll notice that I'm smaller than Lucy. (*She sits down*) This way——

ROGER. Would you like me to sit beside you?

SUZANNE. Very much!

ROGER. (*Aside*) Oh-ho! “Very much!” Strange she does take me for Bellac! My voice is nothing like his—well, let's see how this will come out?—(*He sits beside her and, turning his back*) How good of you to come!—You love me just a little bit, dear?

SUZANNE. (*Turning her back to him*) Oh, yes!

ROGER. (*Aside; as he rises*) She loves him!
Oh, the villain, the rascal!

SUZANNE. (*Aside*) What's the matter with him?

ROGER. (*Sitting beside her again*) Let me be near you, as I used to be! (*He takes her hand*)

SUZANNE. (*Aside, indignantly*) He's taking her hand!

ROGER. (*Aside, indignantly*) She lets him take her hand! It's horrible!

SUZANNE. Oh!

ROGER. You're trembling!—

SUZANNE. Why—You're trembling—

ROGER. No, it's you!—Can it be? (*Aside*) We'll see! (*To SUZANNE*) Are you afraid?

SUZANNE. (*Aside, indignantly, as she rises*) "You!"*

ROGER. (*Aside, breathing heavily*) Well, they haven't got that far anyway?

(SUZANNE comes back, resolutely, and reseats herself near him in silence.)

ROGER. (*Aside, agitated*) What? More? Well!—(*Aside*) Then you're not afraid?

SUZANNE. Afraid? With you?

ROGER. (*Aside*) With!—! So the cad has gone as far as that! I'll get to the bottom of this! It's my duty! Her moral welfare is in my hands. (*To SUZANNE*) Well! In that case, why do you avoid me? (*He draws her to him*).

SUZANNE. (*Outraged*) Oh!

ROGER. Why do you turn from me? (*He puts his arm around her*)

SUZANNE. Oh!!

ROGER. Why do you deny me your lips? (*He leans over her*)

* Roger uses the familiar "tu."—Tr.

SUZANNE. (*Springing to her feet*) This is too much!

ROGER. This is too much!

SUZANNE. Look at me—Suzanne!—Not Lucy, but Suzanne! Do you hear?

ROGER. And this is Roger! Not Bellac, but Roger, do you hear?

SUZANNE. Bellac?

ROGER. My poor child! Then it was true? Oh, Suzanne, Suzanne! How you have wounded me!—Well, he's coming,—I'll wait for him!

SUZANNE. Who?

ROGER. Don't you understand, I read the letter!

SUZANNE. The letter?—I read *your* letter!

ROGER. My letter? Bellac's letter?

SUZANNE. Bellac's?—It was from you!

ROGER. From me?

SUZANNE. From you! To Lucy!

ROGER. To Lucy? No! To you! To You! To you!

SUZANNE. To Lucy! Lucy! Lucy, who lost it!

ROGER. (*Astonished*) Lost it!

SUZANNE. I was there when she was asking the servant about it! You don't mean to say?—And I found it.

ROGER. (*Understanding*) You found it?

SUZANNE. Yes, and I knew everything!—Headache, and rendezvous and all that. And I wanted to see; so I came and you took me for her—

ROGER. I?

SUZANNE. (*Keeping back her tears*) Yes, you! you!—You took me for her, you told her you loved her!—Yes, you did!—Then why did you tell me you didn't love her—You told me just now—and that you weren't going to marry her.—Why did you tell me that! You shouldn't have done that! Marry her if you want;—but you shouldn't have told me. That wasn't right—if you loved her—you shouldn't have—(*Throwing herself in his arms*)

You shouldn't have! Oh, don't marry her! Don't marry her!

ROGER. Oh, my dear Suzanne! How happy I am!

SUZANNE. What?

ROGER. Then that letter you found wasn't sent to you?

SUZANNE. To me?

ROGER. I didn't send it—I swear!

SUZANNE. But I—

ROGER. I swear! It was sent to Lucy by Bellac! Now I understand, you thought—just as I did—Oh, I see everything now!—Oh, my dear Suzanne, what an awful fright you gave me! It was fearful!

SUZANNE. But what about?

ROGER. What about? Oh—It's absurd—don't ask—it was base of me. Forgive me, I beg you, forgive me!—

SUZANNE. Then you're not going to marry her?

ROGER. But I'm telling you—!

SUZANNE. Then I don't understand at all. Only tell me you won't marry her, and I'll believe you.

ROGER. Of course I won't—What a child you are!—Don't cry, wipe your eyes, my dear Suzanne, there's nothing to cry about!

SUZANNE. I can't help it!

ROGER. Why?

SUZANNE. I have only you in the world—I don't want you to leave me!

ROGER. Leave you?

SUZANNE. (*Sobbing*) You know how jealous I am. You—you can't understand that! I saw this evening, when I tried to make you jealous by talking with M. Bellac you didn't seem to care at all. You didn't care anything about me!

ROGER. I wanted to kill him!

SUZANNE. To kill him? (*Puts her arms around his neck*) How nice you are!—Then you thought—?

ROGER. Let's not say any more about that, it's all over, forgotten, the past is dead. Let's begin all over again: from my arrival—How are you, Suzanne? How are you, dear? It's been so long since I've seen you! Come to me, dear, the way you used to! (*He seats himself with her beside him*)

SUZANNE. Oh, Roger, how nice you are! What lovely things you say! You love me better than you love her, then?

ROGER. (*With feeling*) Love you! But isn't it my duty to love you? As a relative, as a tutor, as an honest man? Love you! When I read that letter I don't know what happened to me—then I understand how deep my feelings were—yes, I love you, my dear child, my divine creature! More than I ever imagined I did! And I want you to know—(*Tenderly*)—don't you feel that I love you deeply, dear little Suzanne?

SUZANNE. (*A little surprised at his vehemence*) Yes—Roger—

ROGER. The way you look at me—I frightened you—you don't believe me—I'm not used to—I'm not used to saying tender things, I'm awkward—I don't know how to say those things—one's emotions are influenced by maternal training and you know my mother; she has made a dryasdust scientist of me. Science has been my sole preoccupation—You have been my sole distraction—the one ray of sunshine in my dreary youth—You have only me and I have only you—and I, my dear child, whom else have I to love but you?—And I didn't know! You have charmed me as one is charmed by a child!—With your simplicity, with your grace! I was your teacher, but your pupil as well. While I was nursing your mind to blossom forth into thought, you were planting seeds of tenderness in my heart. I taught you to read, you taught me to—love!. It was your tiny pink fingers, the silk of your golden hair that woke my heart to its first kisses! You crept

into my heart then, and you have grown now until your soul has filled mine! (Pause) Now do you believe me?

SUZANNE. (*Moved, she rises and speaks in a low voice*) Let's go!

ROGER. Why?—Where?

SUZANNE. (*Troubled*) Away from here—

ROGER. But why?

SUZANNE. It's so dark!

ROGER. But, just a moment ago—

SUZANNE. A moment ago I didn't see what you meant—

ROGER. No, stay, stay! There's no better place than this. I have so much to tell you. My heart is so full! I don't know why I tell you all this—It's true—It's so good to say these things—Ah, Suzanne—stay!—Dear Suzanne—(*He holds her*)

SUZANNE. No, I beg you!

ROGER. *You?**

SUZANNE. (*More and more troubled*) I—beg you—

ROGER. But *only* a moment ago—

SUZANNE. Yes, but now—

ROGER. Why?

SUZANNE. I don't know,—I—

ROGER. You're crying! Have I hurt you?

SUZANNE. No! No!

ROGER. Have I offended you, without knowing it?—?

SUZANNE. No, no,—I don't know. I don't understand. Please, let's go away from here!

ROGER. Suzanne!—I don't understand!—I can't see!—

(*The DUCHESS appears.*)

DUCHESS. And do you know why? It is be-

* She uses the formal "vous."

cause neither of you can see what's as clear as day!
(*She turns up the gas*) There!

ROGER. Aunt!

DUCHESS. My dear children, how happy you make me! Go on, kiss your bride!

ROGER. (*Not understanding at first*) My bride—Suzanne! (*He looks at his aunt, then at SUZANNE*) Ohh! It's true,—I love her!

DUCHESS. (*Joyously*) Nonsense! Even when it's as clear as day? (*To SUZANNE*) And how about you?

SUZANNE. (*With downcast eyes*) Oh, Aunt!

DUCHESS. It seemed—that you could see all the time! Women's eyes are a little better than men's, eh? That idea of mine to turn down the gas was splendid. So everything's going nicely now? Well, there is only your mother to see!

ROGER. What?

DUCHESS. Oh, it will be a little difficult!—Here she is! Here they all come—The whole tragedy! Shh! Not a word! Leave everything in my hands, I'll take care of it. What's all this?

(*Enter MADAME DE CÉRAN, DES MILLETS, surrounded by ladies, the GENERAL, BELLAC, LUCY, MADAME DE LOUDAN, MADAME ARRIÉGO, PAUL and JEANNE; and the others.*)

MME. DE CÉRAN. Great news, Aunt!

DUCHESS. What?

MME. DE CÉRAN. Revel is dead!

DUCHESS. You're fooling!

MME. DE CÉRAN. It's in the evening papers. Look! (*She hands her a paper*)

DUCHESS. Well—(*Takes the paper and reads it*)

MME. ARRIÉGO. (*To the Poet*) Beautiful, superb!

MME. DE LOUDAN. Beautiful! Inspired!

GENERAL. Remarkable! One excellent line!

DES MILLETS. Oh, General!

GENERAL. Yes, indeed! An excellent line!

"The—" how does it go? "Honor is like a god which hath one altar only!"

PAUL. (To JEANNE) A trifle too many feet!

BELLAC. (To LUCY *after looking at paper*) He died at six o'clock!

SAINT-RÉAULT. (To his wife, *showing her paper*) Yes, at six o'clock. Oh, I have M. Toulonnier's promise!

BELLAC. (To LUCY) Toulonnier gave me a formal promise—

MME. DE CÉRAN. (To the DUCHESS) Toulonnier is on our side.

DUCHESS. Well, where is your Toulonnier?

SAINT-RÉAULT. He just received a telegram.

MME. DE CÉRAN. (Aside) That confirms the appointment. Good!—But why—? (Enter TOULONNIER) Ah—At last!

ALL. It's he! Ah! Ah!

(TOULONNIER comes down-stage, surrounded by the company.)

MME. DE CÉRAN. My dear Secretary General!

SAINT-RÉAULT. My dear Toulonnier!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Well, the telegram—?

BELLAC. It's about poor Revel, is it not?

TOULONNIER. (Embarassed) Yes, about Revel.

BELLAC. Well, what about him?

DUCHESS. (Looking at TOULONNIER) It says he isn't dead!

MME. DE CÉRAN, BELLAC, and SAINT-RÉAULT.

(Showing the papers) But the papers!

DUCHESS. They're mistaken!

ALL. Oh!

DUCHESS. For once! (To TOULONNIER) Aren't they?

TOULOUNNIER. Well, he's not exactly dead!

SAINT-RÉAULT. (*Sinking into a chair*) Yet?

DUCHESS. And I'll warrant he's received another appointment!

TOULOUNNIER. Commander of the Legion of Honor.

SAINT-RÉAULT. Again!

TOULOUNNIER. (*Showing his telegram*) It will appear in to-morrow's Official! (*To SAINT-RÉAULT, sympathetically*) Believe me, I feel deeply—!

DUCHESS. (*Aside, looking at TOULOUNNIER*) He knew it before he came this evening! He's a good one!—I too have some important news to announce!

ALL. (*Turning toward the DUCHESS*) Ahh!

DUCHESS. Two things!

LUCY. What?

MME. DE LOUDAN. What, Duchess?

BELLAC. What?

DUCHESS. First, the engagement of our friend Miss Lucy Watson to Professor Bellac!

ALL. Bellac? What!!

BELLAC. (*Aside*) Duchess!

DUCHESS. Ah! You must make some reparation.

BELLAC. Rep— Oh! With pleasure! Ah, Lucy!

LUCY. (*Astonished*) Why, Madame!

DUCHESS. (*Aside*) Reparation, my child!

LUCY. None is necessary because there is no fault to repair! However, my ideas and my inclinations are in perfect harmony. (*She gives her hand to BELLAC*)

BELLAC. Ah, Lucy!

DUCHESS. Good! Number one!

MME. DE LOUDAN. You are the happiest of women, Lucy!

DUCHESS. Second piece of news.

MME. DE LOUDAN. Another engagement?

DUCHESS. Yes.

MME. DE LOUDAN. It's a regular festival!

DUCHESS. The engagement of my dear nephew, Roger de Céran—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Duchess!

DUCHESS. To a girl, who is very dear to my heart—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, Aunt!

DUCHESS. My sole heir—

MME. DE CÉRAN. Your—?

DUCHESS. My fortune and my family name will be hers—! My adopted daughter, Mademoiselle Suzanne de Villiers de Réville.

SUZANNE. (*Throwing herself into the DUCHESS' arms*) Oh, my mother!

MME. DE CÉRAN. But, Duchess—!

DUCHESS. Find a richer and a nobler name!

MME. DE CÉRAN. Oh, I'm not saying—and yet—
(To ROGER) Consider, Roger—

ROGER. I love her, Mother.

DUCHESS. (*Looking about her*) Number two! There remains— (To PAUL) Come here, will you? What reparation are you going to make?

PAUL. (*Ashamed*) Ah, Duchess, it was you, then?

JEANNE. (*Confused*) Ah, Madame, then you heard—?

DUCHESS. Yes, little trickster, I did.

PAUL. Oh!

DUCHESS. But, since you didn't say too much evil of me, I'll forgive you. You'll be Prefect—

PAUL. Oh, Duchess! (*He kisses her hand*)

JEANNE. Ah, Madame—! "Gratitude", as Saint-Evremont says—

PAUL. What's the use—now?

CURTAIN.

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